

# SHAH ABDUL LATIF BHITAI AND OTHER SUFI POETS OF PAKISTANI LANGUAGES

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**Culture, Tourism & Antiquities Department**  
**Government of Sindh**

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# **OTHER SUFI POETS OF PAKISTANI LANGUAGES**

**Sindhi original researched and written by**

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**Culture, Tourism & Antiquities Department**  
**Government of Sindh**

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## **PUBLISHER'S NOTE**

Since commence of Culture Department, Government of Sindh, it has been working for spreading the message of world's great poet- Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai. We celebrate his anniversary called 'Urs' annually, with a great spirit. During Urs, seminars, conferences, musical concerts and other programmes are organized. National & International Scholars are invited to present their papers and large number of writers, devotees and followers attend the Urs and pay homage to their beloved poet. No doubt the Urs of Shah Latif Bhitai is one of the biggest festivals of Sindh.

Publications of different aspects on Shah jo Risalo and its translation is still being carried out by different scholars. Major research work on Bhitai has been done in Sindhi language, while we are in dire need to translate his work in other languages of the world too in order to spread his message to the world.

Culture Department has always tried to fulfill its responsibilities and to contribute its due part. Besides, foreign scholars, local scholars including Agha Muhammad Yaqub, Agha Saleem, Amena Khamesani, Abdul Ghafoor Alasti and others have translated his kalam (Poetry) into English.

This book is also the direct translation of a Sindhi book: "Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai aein Pakistani Bolian ja Sufi Shair".

The book comprises a comparative study on Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai and other Sufi poets of Pakistani languages. The study had been carried out by young scholars: Dr. Kamal Jamro and Mr. Tariq Aziz Sheikh. This research work was earlier published by Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai Chair, University of Karachi in 1998; under the supervision of Dr. Fahmida Hussain. However Culture Department get it translated by Mr. Saleem Noorhusain in 2010.

The languages of the Sufi poets included in this study are not only spoken in Pakistan but in different countries also.

This is a fact that, languages have no territories / boundaries, so far as the languages of the Sufi Poets are concerned, they are not limited with their natives. Their thoughts, beliefs and message is for all humankind.

Wherever these languages and message is understandable, their devotees and followers are found. As far as the title of book is concerned, it is the true translation of the original.

This book is providing a brief knowledge of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai and other Sufi poets as well as their Languages. This comparative study represents that, the foresight/philosophy of all these Sufis is same. They all have emphasized on betterment of all mankind.

This is a Primary work, which no doubt needs a further research and expansion. I appreciate the efforts of Mr. Manzoor Ahmed Kanasro, Director General, Culture Sindh, who took his keen interest in publishing this book.

**Saeed Ahmed Awan**

Secretary

Culture, Tourism & Antiquities Department

Government of Sindh

1, September, 2013

Karachi



## PREFACE

Extremism is one of the major current issues of the world. People are losing their tolerance, patience, endurance and stamina. These issues are not new, however browsing the past world's history; we can find extremism wavering by the time with peak and breach but never ended.

Religious extremism is found in every society of the world. It is the reason why mysticism prevailed in every religion of the world. It is the same philosophy which is known as Sufism in Islam, Vedanta in Hinduism and Mysticism in Christianity. Philosophy of Mysticism emphasises on human rights (Huqooqul Ibad), while another side of the religion "Rights of God" (Huqooq-ul-Allah) are supposed to be fulfilled as personal affairs of a man.

While going through the history of Sindh, specially history of Sindhi literature one could find the mysticism in classical poetry since its beginning. Since, Qazi Qadan till Shaikh Ayaz, Ustad Bukhari, Tajal Bewas and Imdad Hussaini, the philosophy of mysticism is found in every poet's thoughts. While the name of Shah Abdul Bhitai is leading the Sindhi poetry in mystic perspective.

The famous European research scholar Dr. H.T. Sorely claimed Shah Abdul Latif as the "World's Greatest Poet". Many national and international scholars including Dr. Ernest Trump, Dr. H.T. Sorely, Dr. Annemarie Schimmel,

Allama I.I Qazi and others have made great efforts for doing research on poetry and message of Shah Latif. They proved that, Bhitai's verses are in Sindhi language but his thoughts and message is for all the human kind.

We believe that, the poetry of Shah Latif is full of deep thought which is for all people living at all corners of the world, as well as the philosophy of all Sufi poets of the world has similar meaning and message.

Keeping in view of above, Dr. Fahmida Hussain, the then Director of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai Chair, University of Karachi proposed a comparative research study on Shah Latif and other Sufi poets of Pakistani languages.

In this research work a comparative study of poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai and other Sufi poets of Pakistani languages like Rehman Baba (Pushto) Baba Bulleh Shah (Punjabi), Khwaja Fareed (Siraiki), Jam Duruk (Balochi) and Khwaja Mir Dard (Urdu) has been carried out.

A brief life history of all above poets and their languages is also included in this work. After completion of the study, this book was published by Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai Chair, University of Karachi in 1998. Dr. Fahmida Hussain supervised this all work. She is a teacher of Tariq Aziz and mine, later; I did my Ph.D. under her supervision on the topic "A research study of Sindhi Folk Songs". My that thesis was published under the title of "Sindhu Ja Geeta", by Culture Department, Government of Sindh. It was awarded as the best research book for year 2008 by Sindhi Adabi Sangat (Sindhi Literary Society).

The book "Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai and other Sufi poets of Pakistani Languages" was my first research book, while more than twenty published books (as an Author, Researcher, Editor, Compiler & Reviewer) are at my credit.

When this book was published, I felt great pleasure but even I was unaware of its importance/value. It was also not much acknowledged at that time. Later on, the University of Karachi, Shah Abdul Latif University Khairpur and Federal Urdu University, Karachi included this book in their syllabus.

The Higher Education Commission (HEC), Islamabad included a chapter from this book in the syllabus of Sindhi compulsory subject of degree classes. Since 2003, this book is being taught in all the public sector Universities of Sindh.

As this book is included as one of my publications in my curriculum vitae (C.V), so when my friend Mr. Zulfiqar Shah, the Joint Director, Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (PILER) sent my CV to the American Counslate General, I was invited by the State Department to visit USA in July 2011 and honoured there specially because of this book. In this regard Mr. Muhammad Javed Sadiq, Cultural Affairs Advisor, U.S. Consulate General, Karachi sent me an e-mail on 3<sup>rd</sup>, December, 2010, wherein he mentioned that:

“Dr. Jamro,

This refers to my telephonic conversation with you a short while ago. As discussed, we are looking at your proposed visit to the U.S. in June/July, 2011, for a two/three week period. This would be an individual program built around your field of expertise and suggestions for meetings/visits to professional and cultural groups and meetings. It is indeed seldom that a program is setup for only one person. Pakistan is proud of you!”

There I delivered a lecture on the message in poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai.

When I presented this book before Mr. Shams Jafrani in the year 2010, who was the then Secretary Culture Department, who immediately decided to get it translated

into English and handed over to Mr. Saleem Noorhusain for the said purpose.

Translation is a very difficult work. A translator should be well aware of both the languages, he/she must be know the sense, style, environment and plenty of vocabulary of the both languages. Mr. Saleem Noorhusain is a seasoned translator; he knows both Sindhi and English languages very well. He kept in view the taste of English reader, while the translation. He revised contents, where he felt necessary and gave a detailed overview on Sufisim, Sindhi literature and poetry of Shah Latif in the translator's note and his own conclusion also.

Mr. Saleem Noorhusain completed the translation and Culture Department decided to publish it in 2011, but due to some unavoidable reasons it was delayed.

I am thankful to my friend Mr. Manzoor Ahmed Kanasro, the present Director General, Culture Department and Mr. Saeed Ahmed Awan, the Secretary Culture, Tourism & Antiquities Department who took necessary measures for publishing this book without any delay.

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## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The original Sindhi book 'Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai aen Pakistani boliyan ja Sufi Shaer-a', of which this is a translation, is essentially designed for the Sindhi readership. Where every Sindhi, worth his salt, is generally aware of the life and work of the book's principal protagonist as well as the subjects of his work including Sufism, a non-Sindhi English reader is not. Hence, the translator has thought it fit to include here in this note what English readership is not generally aware of in the form of excerpts/extracts from various publications footnotes, in the translated text.

### **Sufism and Sufi Orders**

It is "a form of mysticism within Islam. The Muslim mystic is called a Sufi, and this name is generally derived from the Arabic '*suf*' (wool) and explained as referring to the coarse garments worn by the devotee. The movement in its earliest phase represented a puritanical reaction against the luxury and license prevalent among the wealthy classes under the later Omayyad and the 'Abbasid caliphs, as well as dissatisfaction with the formalism of orthodox Islam. Later Sufi apologists therefore did not hesitate to claim as Sufis many of the contemporaries of Mohammed and the religious leaders of the first century of Islam; they pointed to the simple and austere life of the prophet as offering a model for his followers. To this ascetic outlook and practice, no doubt influenced by contact with Christian anchorites, was

presently added a quest for a personal relation with God. Neo-Platonism had already greatly influenced the development of Christian mysticism; it now gradually molded Sufi doctrine. Passages in the Kuran and *hadith* were given an esoteric meaning to establish them as foundations for the mystical structure. The goal of the Sufi life was spiritual perfection and union with God; the way to that goal was by self-examination, bodily and mental discipline and the life of service.

Certain enthusiasts caused great scandals by using intemperate language to express their mystical experiences; the celebrated Hallaj was convicted of blasphemy and executed in 922 for uttering the phrase *ana-l haqq*, 'I am the truth'. The more sober Sufis, such as Muhasibi (died 837), Kharraz (died 899) and Junaid (died 910), while not escaping suspicion and disapproval, avoided giving fatal offence to the orthodox. It was the great jurist and theologian al-Ghazali (died 1111) who succeeded in reconciling Sufi doctrine with formal Islam, and after his time Sufi was no longer a term of reproach.

"At quite an early date the Sufis began to organize themselves into sects which somewhat resembled the Christian monastic orders, but it is with Jilani (died 1166) and his pupil Suhrawardi (died 1261) that the regular systematization of the mystical orders begins. These orders (*tariqas*), which are called after their founders (ie. Qadiriya, Suhrawardiya, Shadhiliya, Naqshbandiya etc.), are very numerous and have spread to all parts of the world; new affiliations continue to arise and their adherents number many millions. The Sufi order consists of a certain number of friars residing in monasteries (*khanqahs*), though not in celibacy, under the rule of elders (*shaikh*, *pir*), together with lay brethren who attend the ritual prayers and dances (*dhikr*) and hear the sermons (*wa'z*).

Besides these regular Sufis there are a great many wandering mendicants (called *Fakir* in Arabic and *dervish* in

Persian) who do not acknowledge loyalty to any particular order. These while including men of undoubted piety and holiness have been for the greater part been worthless beggars and frauds, who claimed to have miraculous powers and by their scandalous behavior brought the name Sufi into disrepute. Sufism with its doctrines of self-effacement and divine love powerfully influenced the literature of Islam and in particular the poetry of Persia, Turkey and Muslim India. The greatest of the Sufi Theosophists is the Spanish Arab Ibn al-Arabi (died 1240) whose subtle system dominated the subsequent history of the movement; the most famous of the Sufi poets are the Egyptian Ibn al-Farid (died 1235) and the Persians Sana'i (died 1150), Attar (died 1230) and Rumi (died 1273). Politically the Sufi movement has exercised considerable influence both as working class revolt against tyranny {eg. *Shah Inayat Shaheed's at Jhok in Sindh in late 17<sup>th</sup> century: Tr.*} and by the ascendancy prominent mystics have frequently obtained over rulers. During the last century Sufism has steadily declined in the face of materialism on the one hand and the supremacy of 'official' Islam on the other. Yet signs are not wanting of a revival and it may well be that the Sufi doctrine and ethics, purified and rid of the superstitions and ridiculous accretions that have so discredited the movement, will once more in the future rescue Islam from empty formalism and spiritual sterility." [Chamber's Encyclopedia: 1973, Vol.XIII, p. 262-3].

"The history of Indian Islam is, however, is not only a history of political facts, of conquests and wars, of expansion and breakdown, but is a spiritual history as well. It is the history of the century-long conflict between the Islamic concept of *tauhid*, strict monotheism, and Hinduism in its different manifestations which constituted, in the eyes of pious Muslims, the very essence of idolatry and polytheism which had been condemned by the Quran. Without the help of the religious specialists, the rulers would scarcely have been able to maintain their rule over the vast country with its various racial and linguistic groups. The decisive force was, in the Islamization of India, however, not the activity of

theologians and specialists in Islamic law and traditions who were sometimes attached to the court but rather that of the mystics who had settled in the Subcontinent as early as the 11<sup>th</sup> century; the first Persian treatise on Islamic mysticism, the *Kashf al-majub*, was written by Ali Hujwiri – called Data Ganj Bukhsh – (d. 1071), whose tomb in Lahore is still a place of pilgrimage for the people.

“In the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, mystical orders and brotherhoods crystallized out of formerly loosely united groups of disciples, who were introduced into the spiritualization of life by their religious guide, the *shaikh* or *pir*. The first representatives of such brotherhoods reached India in the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Probably the most influential among them is Khwaja Mu'inuddin Chisti (d. 1236) from Eastern Iran, who settled in Ajmer in the heart of Rajasthan that had just been conquered by the Delhi kings. His strong personality, his preaching of love of the One God and love of the Prophet, reflected in the love of mankind, won over considerable numbers of Hindus to Islam. His disciples and later members of the order wandered through the whole of India, from Punjab (Fariduddin Shakarganj of Pak Pattan, d. 1265) to the Deccan (Gisudaraz of Gulbarga, d. 1422). One of the centers of the Chistiyya was Delhi, where Nizamuddin Aulia (d. 1325) spiritually guided the population during the reign of seven rulers.

“Baha'uddin Zakariya (d. c. 1265), the Suhrawardi master, settled in Multan, at the border of Sind and the Punjab: one of the leading Persian mystic poets, Fakhruddin Iraqi, stayed with him for 25 years. The Suhrawardiyya, not as austere in their practices as the early Chishtiyya, sent their members throughout the country and gained disciples even in Eastern Bengal. But only in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century members of most important order in the central Islamic countries, the Qadiriyya, reached India.

“...The work of Ibn Arabi (Muhiyuddin, 1165-1240), the Spanish-born mystic who had built a close system of mystical



theosophy in his *Futuhāt al-makkiyya* and the *Fusus al-hikam*, the Bezels of Wisdom, became known in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century, and taught the Muslims the idea of *wahdat al-wujud*, the essential Unity of Being, according to which God and the creation can be understood as two aspects of one Reality. Thus the central dogma of God's unity was overstressed and expanded into a Weltanschauung which has been called either 'pantheistic' or 'monistic'. Both terms, however, do not give full justice to Ibn Arabi's complicated system of thought. ... The poets and, through them, the large masses interpreted the system in the simplified short sentence *hama oost*, 'Everything is He'.

"The idea of an all embracing unity made some Muslim mystics discover similar thoughts in the religious systems of their Hindu neighbors. The Mughal ruler Akbar (reigned 1556-1605), as most of his family attached to Chistiyya order, was certainly influenced by such ideas when he undertook to promote a deeper understanding among the different religions in his empire by arranging discussions of their representatives and by having translated into Persian the main religious and literary works of Hinduism. His great grandson, Dara Shikoh, the heir apparent of the Mughal Empire and member of the Qadiriyya, tried to realize this unity. He even undertook the translation of Upanishads - 'a book that is hidden' (Sura 56/78) - into Persian.

"The more orthodox circles did not approve of such a dangerous interpretation of Islam, which seemed to blur the borders between the two religious communities... It is characteristic of the situation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century India that the protest against the widespread theories of 'Everything is He' was launched again by a mystical order, namely the Naqshbandiyya. This group had been given its rules by Baha'uddin Naqshband (d.1389) from central Asia, and had deeply influenced life at the Timurid court of Herat where most intellectuals, including the great poet Jami, attached themselves to it. Babur, the first Mughal emperor, knew of the order quite well for one of its centers was located in his

home province Farghana; there two rivaling branches of the Central Asian Naqshbandiyya were to play a decisive political role in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

"The activity of the Naqshbandis in the Subcontinent was limited during the first century of Mughal rule. More emotional orders played a greater role. Only toward the end of Akbar's days, Khwaja Baqi billah, one of the leading masters of the order, came to India and gained a number of disciples very soon. Among them was Ahmad Sirhindi (d. 1624), who tried to attract members of the Mughal court to the Naqshbandi path. Imprisoned for a year at Gwalior, he was soon released and eventually gained the favor of the emperor Jahangir {*reigned 1605-1627*}. His aim was to go back to pure teachings of Islam, which excludes a 'Unity of Being' but admits of the possibility of 'Unity of Vision', *wahdat ash-shuhud*. i.e., in the moments of highest bliss the mystic eye witnesses absolute Unity but knows that no essential union between creation and Creator is possible, for the 'Lord is Lord, and the servant is servant', as the formulation of this school holds. 'I am His servant' – that is the highest station man can reach, for it is the station of the Prophet during his Nightly Journey (cf. Sura 17/1).

The central thesis is not *hama oost*, 'Everything is He', but *hama az oost*, 'Everything is from Him- a formulation, which is, indeed, much closer not only to orthodox Islam but to the theories of unity as professed by the early mystics (which had been interpreted during the centuries following Ibne Arabi in the light of wujudi theories). Ahmad Sirhindi's successors and followers successfully worked to penetrate into the court circles. Shah Jahan's {*reigned 1627-1658*} second son Aurangzeb Alamgir {*reigned 1658-1707*} lent his ear to their advice, and fought against the ideals which led his elder brother Dara Shikoh to his attempts of mystical reconciliation between Islam and Hinduism... The Naqshbandiyya also spread in other parts of India, for instance in the Lower Indus Valley {*but it does not appear to have made much headway there because most spiritual*

*leaders as well as the general public in the region has been and continue to be attached to hama oost: Tr.}*

"The other orders continued their activities; some of them had split up, forming numerous sub-groups. Almost every poet and writer was connected in some way with a mystical order. Thus, the whole mystical vocabulary, as developed during centuries, was practically common stock for all members of the society, down to the lowest strata. Poetry and prose written during the period can be understood and enjoyed only with a certain knowledge of its mystical background; for whether the population of the unhappy country would accept tribulations patiently in the feeling that 'Everything is from Him', or would believe in the all embracing Unity of Being, which showed its strange manifestations in suffering and pain – the mystical way was, for most of them, the one source of strength which enabled them to survive during the afflictions which were showered upon north India in the 18<sup>th</sup> century."- ['Pain and Grace: A Study of Two Mystical Writers of Eighteenth-Century Muslim India', Annemarie Schimmel, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1976; pp. 4 to 8].

## **Shah Latif**

Most of what appears under this head has been gleaned from Dr. Motilal Jotwani's book '*Shah Abdul Latif: his life and work*' (2006) and the one cited above as well as Amena Khamisani's '*Risalo of Shah Abul Latif Bhitai: Translated in Verse*' (1994), and is subject to the opinions of Dr. H. T. Sorley (1940) and A. K. Brohi (1963) as quoted by Dr. Jotwani at p. 2 and 3 respectively: "There is no really satisfactory account of Shah Abdul Latif's life. Nor will there be;" "Very little is known about the life of Shah Abdul Latif, and really no satisfactory account of it can be offered;" because neither the saint-point himself has left any record of his life or work nor has any contemporary of his done so, and hence whatever we have before us at present comes, by and large, from oral tradition.

In 1398 AD a man from Herat named Syed Mir Ali along

with his son Syed Hyder accompanied Amir Taimur in his military campaigns to India, where the son went on a tour of the country. In the course of his travels he came to Hala Kandi (now called Old Hala), married the daughter of his local host, fathered a son, went back to Herat after 17 months on learning of his father's death, and himself died within 37 months after his return. It was his son, also named Mir Ali, who is the progenitor of two great Sindhi poets, Shah Abul Karim of Bulri and Shah Abul Latif of Bhit. This House of Syeds, which traces its lineage back to Imam Musa Kazim and through him to Hazrat Ali, the fourth Caliph of Islam and cousin and son-in-law of the Holy Prophet Muhammad <sup>PBUH</sup>, commands "incredible veneration" of Sindhis on account not only of its genealogy but also of its mysticism.

Shah Abdul Latif was born in the Islamic month of Jamadi al-thani in the year 1102 AH (1689 AD) in Hala taluqa of Hyderabad district at village *Bhaipur*, which later came to be called *Hala Haveli* after the mansion (*haveli*) Shah Habib, father of Shah Latif, had built there. He passed away on 14<sup>th</sup> Safar 1165 AH/02.01.1752 AD at *Bhit* (sand dune), where he had spent last ten years of his life with his wife Saeeda Begum and his devotees, listening to Sufi music and composing his folk music-based poems. Though the birthplace of the greatest mystical poet of the Lower Indus Valley has long since fallen victim to the ravages of time, the place of his death the Bhit (which later came to be known as *Bhitshah* because of its being his last residence) lives on as a pilgrimage for the countless number of disciples, devotees and admirers who visit his beautiful mausoleum all the year round, especially during three days of *Shah-jo-Melo* (literally 'Shah's Fair' which is organized to mark his death anniversary) in the month of Safar every year.

Shah Abdul Latif "belonged to the philosophic school of the Sufis who displayed the essence of pantheistic Sufism. We know that men of his stature reach the heights where all religions are reduced to the fundamentals which are common to every religion. Shah Abdul Latif is a Sufi, a mystic,

but not of the type of Jalaluddin Rumi (for every Sufi is a type by himself). Neither is he entirely of the school of Kabir, though he comes very close to it. Malik Muhammad Jayasi, under the influence of Islamic mysticism, describes himself (or the seeker) in the role of a male lover and depicts God, the Beloved, as a woman. Unlike Jayasi and like Kabir, or in the fashion of Indian mysticism, Shah Abdul Latif presents himself as a woman". Objectifying his emotions through his heroines -- Sassui, Marui, Sohni, Nuri, Mumal, Lila and Sorath, "he feels the pangs of separation and seeks the union with the Beloved. His poetry is one long wail of separation-the sepparration which is more than human and is symbolic of the longing of the soul for the union with God in the true spirit of advaitawada or *wahdat al-wujud*", the Sufi metaphysical doctrine of *Immanence*.

Shah Abdul Latif believed in this doctrine in particular as also in shari'ah in general. Since he belonged to the family of Sayyids, the reputed religious teachers, he observed the religious practices also. But at the same time his life and work show that he was not an orthodox Muslim", nor did he belong, as "study of both internal and external evidences" shows, to any of the main four orthodox Sufi Orders including the one (*Qadiri tariqah* founded by Hazrat Muhiyuddin Abdul Qadir of Gilan, 1077-1166) with which he is generally connected by his biographers. He "led the simple and meaningful life of a Bhakti-movement poet. There was an inner integrity in his life and work. His life was a piece of poetry and his poetry an unconscious record of his life.

The two were the constituent parts of one organic whole. He was the author of *one* work and we ought to read all his Surs in order to appreciate any one of them. We see Shah Abdul Latif there, where the gap between the artist and the people is the least and all are integrated in one simple community life. Ever aware of the reality which had its roots in the rural Sindh, he never lost contact with the simple colloquial speech. His effortless use of *Alankaras* [imagery] in his poetry gives us the feeling of being at a particular place at

a particular time. He devised the impersonal *Vibhavas* (objective correlatives to express his personal emotions effectively enough to engender *Rasa* in us. Shah Abdul Latif imbibed the best of Islam and Hinduism and helped develop a type of Sufism which was more "native and soil-bound in its character. His "*Risalo* is not a philosophical treatise, but it propounds through its love-songs the doctrine of *advaita*" or *wahdat al-wujud* or *immanence*. "Religion of the saint-poet is universal brotherhood. Though he was born in a particular community, he belongs to the one family of Man".

Here are some highlights of his simple and not very eventful or melodramatic life.

His father Shah Habib used to give charms and amulets, besides indigenous medicines, to the sick and prayed to God for those in difficulty. Once a Mughal grandee, living in a nearby village, sent for him for medication of his ailing young daughter. As he couldn't go himself for some reason, he sent his young son instead. Legend has it that the young Latif went there, lost his heart to the purdah-observing damsel while holding her little finger in his hand to ascertain the nature of her ailment, and returned, forlorn and love-struck, not to his home but to a nearby jungle, where he was found a day or two later by his father all covered in dust and weak and fragile. The father, sick with worry, divined the cause of his only son's distress, and sought the girl's hand in marriage to his son. The proposal was rejected initially but accepted after sometime, perhaps after young Latif had returned from his itinerancy.

He "left the easy comfort of home and undertook long and difficult journeys on foot. The credit for this goes to his worldly love which 'combed him so, as a carder beats his cotton clean.' These journeys, which are believed to have made in the company of Hindu *jogis* (ascetic minstrels) and *samis* (renouncers of the world) and lasted as many as three years at a stretch, took him, back and forth, to many places in Sindh and near its northern, eastern and western borders.

Some of these find mention in his poems and some do not, while some others though mentioned by him he could not have possibly visited.

The places, which he did visit include the temple of the Hindu goddess Kali on the Ganjo Hill near the present city of Hyderabad, Karachi then known as Kalachi with its coastal whirlpool, the Hellaya Hill of the Nuri- Jam Tamachi tale, then very large and populous city of Thatta, Bhambhore the locale of Sassui-Punhun love story, Hinglaj in Lasbela (Balochistan) with its shrine of the goddess Amba (mother) Parvati Hinglu Devi, the consort of Lord Shiva, called Nani (mother/grandmother) by Muslims, Lahut Laamakaan in Lasbela, Debal Kot (of Lqela-Chanesar folktale fame) and many other places in Laarr (Lower Sindh) like Sujawal, Mughalbhin etc., Lakhpat in Kutch, Madai or Mandwi, Dwarka, Porbunder, Junagarh with its palace of Rai Dyach on Girnar Hill, Khambat or Cambay which is a place between Sabarmati and Mahi rivers in Gujarat and ever consecrated to Lord Shiva, Nangarparkar (Thar) with its Karoonjhar (or Kalingar) hills, Bhalwa and Umarmkot which are the Malir of Umer-Marui tale, and, Ladano in Jaisalmer (India) associated with Mumal-Rano. Since all of it was walking tour, Shah Sahib must have come to know whole terrain under his feet intimately and along the way like Hakrrho and Pabb ranges in Balochistan, the Indus and other rivers, and the coastline.

## **Shah jo Risalo**

"The compiled verses of Shah Abdul Latif are called *Risalo* which means 'Message'. They are the recoded collection of verses known as *Ganj* which is preserved at the museum of the saint-poet. It was 114 years after his death, that the German scholar and missionary, Ernest Trumpp, first published it in 1866 at Leipzig in Germany. He had learnt Sindhi during his temporary stay at Hyderabad and undertook the work of the compilation with the help of two Sindhi scholars. It was he who called the compilation *Shah jo Risalo* (the Message of Shah)." Several new compilations

have appeared since then, the latest being that of Dr. N. A. Baloch's (2009), who has divided the Shah Sahib's verses, after over 40 years of painstaking research into various aspects of the poet's life and work, into 36 instead of 30 *surs* (chapters) which is the number in the compilation upon which the Sindhi original of this translation is based. According to that compilation, sequence of the 30 *surs* is as follows: *Kalyan, Yaman Kalan, Khambhat, Srirag, Samundri, Sohni, Sassui Abri, Mazuri, Desi, Kohyari, Husaini, Leela-Chanesar, Mumal-Rano, Marui, Kamode, Ghatu, Sorath, Kedaro, Sarang, Asa, Ripp, Khahori, Barvo Sindhi, Ramkali, Kapaiti, Purab, Karayal, Pirbhati, Dahar, and Bilawal.*

"*Kalyan* is a Sanskrit word which means peace, 'peace that passeth understanding'." It is a "purely mystical song" and "begins with hymnal praise of God" and the Holy Prophet <sup>PBUH</sup>, goes on to tell of the tribulations the seeker has to suffer in his quest for Him.

The word '*Yaman*' in the second *sur*'s title means "to control one's mind and make it so conscious that it finds peace." Like the first, in this *sur* too "the traditional Sufi ideals are explained". *Khambhat* "means a shelter or refuge. It is also a name of a port in Gujarat." It alludes "to moon and stars as weak reflections of the friend's loveliness" and "deals with the journey of the camel toward the most beautiful and radiant beloved....the camel is, of course, the symbol of the lower self which has to be tamed and driven towards the beloved, be it the Prophet or God Himself."

The next two *surs*, *Srirag* and *Samundri*, are "connected with the dangers of seafaring: in the ocean of this world in which the boat has to be guided by the ever-aware pilot, or the true mystical guide, or by the Prophet himself. The fragile boat (man) requires sails made of sincerity and right action, and the cargo should be prayers so that it may reach safely Port Adan, which name points both the Arabian city and the paradisiacal 'garden of Eden'." From the stage by stage sail to Sri Lanka "lucky merchants may return with pearls and



spices. But, alas! today only a few faithful dealers in jewels are found and most of them offer only cheap beads instead of precious pearls. The events are seen through the eyes of the lonely, desperate wife [with her very amorous and sweet complaints] whose husband has gone out into the dangerous sea to perform the journey of the soul through the raving waves of this world in the hope of heavenly reward".

The river "with its whirlpools and sandbanks" is the pivot around which revolves the fifth Sur *Sohni*, 'the beautiful', 'who died swimming'. "It is a tragic love story which reverts the classical motif of Hero and Leader: here the heroine *Sohni*, unhappily married to a man, whom she despises, swims every night to the island where her beloved *Mehar* grazes the buffalos. One night her sister-in-law replaces the jar, which she uses as sort of swimming vest, by a vessel of unbaked clay, and she dies in the whirling waves. Shah begins the story in the most dramatic moment, when the young woman cries out for help in the cold river, attacked by crocodiles. The whole chapter is merely an extension of this dreadful and yet hoped for moment, when the vessel of her body breaks and she, faithful to her pre-eternal love-covenant with *Mehar*, will be forever united with the friend through her death.

"*Sohni* is one of the favourite folk tales in both Sindh and the Punjab. But even more famous is the story which Shah Latif has made the subject of the following five Surs and which is alluded to in many other verses of the *Risalo*. It is the intriguing story of *Sassui* (*Abri*, 'the weak one', *Ma'dhuri*, 'the helpless one', *Desi* 'the native one', *Kohyari* 'the mountaineer', and *Husaini*, the sad in the tragic melody of the dirges in Muharram)".

Infant *Sassui*, placed in a cushioned wicker basket, was found floating down the river in Bhambhore by a Muslim washerman, who adopted her. She grew up into a beautiful girl. "The fame of her beauty spread widely". Even Punhun, a Baloch prince, came from Ketch to see for himself. He did,

was captivated, and, after masquerading as washerman and agreeing to live in Bhambhore, won her hand in marriage. His brothers came to take him back to Kech. Upon his refusal, "they made the couple drunk" and carried him away on their swift camels, "while the young woman was fast asleep." All these five Surs describe Sassui's search for her beloved consort: "following the tracks of Punhun's camels, she runs in despair through desert and forest, where blue snakes and other frightening creatures live ..... Even the wild animals, trees and birds begin to share her grief and cry with her. Eventually she perishes on the road. This tragic story becomes for Shah the parable of the seeker on the mystical path who undergoes all kinds of tribulations in the quest of God, whom he will find, at the end of the road, in his own heart".

The following sur has again a traditional story as its background, that of *Lila Chaesar*", which can be dated back to 13<sup>th</sup> century Sindh "Chanesar [I or II?] of the Soomra dynasty's Dasra branch ruled Devalkot" in Lower Sindh. "His wife, the spoiled and pleasure loving Lila", is lured into a bargain by a princess from a neighbouring country to let her spend one night with Chanesar in exchange for a necklace worth 900,000 rupees. "Furious that he had been 'sold', Chanesar divorces Lila, and she has to undergo a long process of purification until she is once more acceptable in her husband's presence". Shah speaks only of her suffering and pining, and describes how the queen has to become a slave in order to be accepted by the Lord.

Another folktale of similar character is that of *Mumal Rano*, which forms the basis of the following Sur". It originated in 14<sup>th</sup> century Sindh not far from Umarkot during the reign of Hamir, the last of the Sumra rulers. In order to make good the loss of his treasure suffered by their father due to a lapse of Mumal, she and her sister Sumal built, on the bank of rivulet *Kak* in *Ladano*, a mansion full of fatal tricks, and had it proclaimed all over that whoever defeated the tricks could have the famed beauty Mumal for wife. Many

nobles and princes came and tried their luck but failed and lost their fortunes, some even their lives. Rano, whose sister was married to King Hamir, was able to defeat all the tricks and win Mumal, with whom he was obliged to spend only nights by stealth because his overlord Hamir, jealous of his success vis-à-vis Mumal, had warned him against seeing his ladylove on pain of imprisonment.

The warning materialized sooner than later upon discovery of his stealthy nocturnal visits. He was, however, released on the intercession of his sister, the queen. Eager to be with his beloved, he rode his camel one night to Ladano, where he found her sleeping with some male, who was actually Sumal clothed as male, indeed, Rano himself. Wrongly assuming that she had cheated him, Rano left his riding stick by her side and rode back to Umarkot in disgust, vowing never to see her again. "Eventually, after a long period of waiting, the loving woman is purified and united with the beloved, whose light she knows and recognizes everywhere".

"*Sur Marui* goes back to a historical event in 14<sup>th</sup> century", when Umar II of the Sumras (1050 to 1350 AD) was on the throne. "Home of the heroine is located in Thar, where the mighty Omar of Omarkot kidnapped her. But the lovely maiden refuses to become the nobleman's wife" despite enticements in the shape of royal jewellery and wear and even torture in the shape of chains and padlocks. When every stratagem fails, the potentate sends her back to her beloved people, unblemished.

*Sur Kamode* "relies upon another historical event. It is the famous tale of Prince Jam Tamachi's falling in love with the charming fishermaid Nuri" (14<sup>th</sup> century). Jam is so pleased with her selflessness, humility and complete surrender that he raises her above all his other queens. "She is the *nafs mutmai'na*, 'the soul at peace' (Sura 89/27), returning to her Lord....It is the only Sur that sings of fulfilled love and happiness, not of burning love and hopeless search".

The very short *Sur Ghatu* takes up once more the theme of the world or nafs under the image of the dangerous, merciless sea with its monsters which swallow the fishermen". It is the "story of brave Morirrio who slayed the whale that had killed his six brothers."

*Sur Sorath* "is built upon a Hindu tale from Girnar, Gujrat, according to which King Diyach offered his head to the minstrel {Bijal} who had enchanted him by his music". Central theme of the *Sur*, as Shah develops it, is "self surrender at the bidding of the mystical beloved and heavenly quality of music".

"From the world of Hindu legend the poet returns to Islamic subjects in the following two Surs: *Kedaro*, an old mourning melody, is devoted to the martyrs of Kerbela who were slain, led by the Prophet's grandson Husain on 10<sup>th</sup> Muharram 68 AH (10<sup>th</sup> October 680) by the forces of Umayyads. *Sur Sarang*, the rain song, ingeniously blends the traditional Hindu imagery of waiting for rain with the veneration of the Prophet".

After *Sur Aeman Kalyan* it in *Sur Asa* {'asa' means fervent desire or hope} that Shah has elaborately spelled out his philosophic thought of Unity of Being, filling it with "mystical wisdom and poetical imagery".

*Ripp* means deep distress. The *Sur* "outwardly describes the deep distress of a woman whose consort has been away for a long time for some unknown reason." Her's is a pathetic predicament for she is in severe cold of winter without quilt or mattress and her hut is in dilapidated condition. Allegorically, her condition represents what western mystics call 'dark night of the soul'.

*Sur Khahori* eulogises the jogis, "ascetics who wander about in mountains and wastelands searching for a kind of wild fruit" for their sustenance. The walk from *Ganjo Takkar* (bald hill) near Hyderabad Sindh "to the sacred mountain

*Hinglaj* (an ancient Shiva sanctuary in Balochistan) and suffer every possible discomfort” during the arduous journey. “They are further described in detail in the longwinded” *Sur Ramkali*, which constitutes for the historian of religion one of most interesting parts of the Risalo. In between the two poems in praise of the jogis as ‘perfect men’ is *Sur Barvo Sindhi*. It expresses the deep veneration of the poet for his beautiful and mysterious, powerful and mild, divine lord, utilizing, toward the end, again the theme of Sassui.

Spinning of cotton was a most important occupation of women in Sindh as well as in Punjab. The word *kapaeti* in the *Sur* of that name means woman spinner of cotton. In the *Sur* itself, “the connection between the spinning woman and the soul which is busy with constant recollection of God is obvious, and the Quranic imagery of God as the merchant {or connoisseur} who buys man’s soul is extended to the idea that the cotton thread, i.e. the heart, has to be refined and” spun “with utmost care so that the spinning soul itself will not be rejected by the merchant {or connoisseur}.”

“In *Sur Purab*, East, are described the feelings of the loving woman who sends out the crow to find out how her beloved is; the crow, *kang*, is the typical messenger bird in Sindh, as was the pigeon in high Persian poetry, and its importance has often been underlined in Sindhi folksongs and mystical poetry. But out of this touching verse Shah turns once more to the” jogis to warn them against making false claims of asceticism. “The theme of the soul-bird, of which the crow is a variation, is taken up in *Sur Kara’il*, the song of the swan, who is admonished not to fly and dive with the other unclean birds, but continue to feed on pearls.”

“In the following *Sur Pirbhati*, ‘Early Morning’, man’s soul is seen as a wandering minstrel who is kindly treated by the ruler of Lasbela, the representative of the Almighty Lord. *Sur Dahar* gives in its first” section “a fine description of the dried up tree, a common sight in the valley of the ever

shifting Indus and its tributaries, but also a sign which leads the poet to praise of the Prophet's kindness in the second part while the Sassui imagery is utilized toward the end. *Sur Bilawal* (I, II) contains historical allusions to the powerful rulers of Sindh who in the end appear to be symbols of Muhammad's <sup>PBUH</sup> grace and munificence. A little joke about Shah Latif's friend and servant forms the last" section of this Sur; he, though 'stinking', 'glutton', 'ugly' -- to mention only a few of his epithets, becomes purified in the rose-water like company of the master."

***Saleem Noorhusain***

*(Karachi; 20<sup>th</sup> August 2013)*

## PREFACE TO THE SINDHI EDITION

Religion, *Tassawwuf* (mysticism), philosophy and science are the more important means available by which man can comprehend the purpose of the creation of universe and life.

Of these, religion requires blind, non-logical faith in creator(s) of the universe and unquestioned acceptance of its expositions on the purpose of creation of universe and life.

Tassawwuf, on the other hand, propounds a concept based on the central idea of *Wahdat-al-Wajud* (unity of all that exists or Pantheism), i.e., whatever exists inside and outside the universe is a manifestation of the same One Being, who can be known, not by reason and senses, but by *wajdan* (spiritual inspiration or insight) alone. To attain that insight one has to undergo many a travail from knowing ones own self to mortification of the self and rigorous discipline. There appear to be two classes of *wahdat-al-wajudi* (pantheistic) Sufis: those who advocate the way of asceticism and renunciation to thwart evil, and those who emphasize resisting evil while remaining engaged in worldly affairs; and thus they wish to attain the insight, which would enable them to know the One Being or direct them to Reality.

The third way of understanding the purpose of the creation of universe and life can be Reason, which leads to

logic and philosophy. By means of Reason one comes to know that nothing is the last word and that change is inevitable. The explanations of the purpose of universe and life offered by logic and philosophy are as diverse as their schools of thought. The materialists have different answers, so have the idealists.

Scientific elucidation of the purpose of universe and life depends upon experiments and tests. It is by way of sense experience that scientists formulate their conclusions. Mental exercise has a vital role in this entire process.

Literature (and art) can be a vehicle for these means (religion, tassawwuf, philosophy and science) of comprehending the purpose of universe and life, and most of the writers and poets have tried to communicate the religious, Sufistic, philosophical and scientific subjects through their creations.

Mystic poets of the world, each in his own way, have tried to comprehend Reality. So are the ways of the poets of Hind and Sindh. Their objective has been to perceive the reality of the Being that has created this universe and life.

The well known English research scholar Dr. Sorely says that mysticism is emotional attitude of man toward God or god, which manifests itself in two ways: one is the sentimental quest for becoming one with God, which is called *Union with God* or just *Unio*; and the other is sentimental quest for fellowship with God, which is called *Communion with God* or just *Communio*. This also includes the belief or faith that through it man can attain the virtues of truth, beauty, goodness and perfection.

A prominent feature of the Indus Valley Sufis is that, in order to achieve their objective, they make God their beloved and love Him in reality, which they express sometimes openly and sometimes under the cover of earthly love. Usually they do it by turning folktales into allegories. To the



Sufis of this land love is like light which can reveal the presence of the True Beloved in every manifestation of this world by removing the cover from its misleading appearance. This is how the doctrines of *Unity in Multiplicity* and *Multiplicity in Unity* are born. The greatest poet of this *wahdat-al-wajudi* (pantheistic) doctrine in Sindh is Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai.

There are a number of Sufi poets in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Balochistan, who have presented tassawwuf in the garb of poetry. We have selected one poet from every major language spoken in Pakistan for comparing their verses with those of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai in order to bring out the topical similarity among them.

The first title that we had thought of for this volume was '*Sindhu Mathur ji Boliyan ja Sufi Shaer-a aen Shah Latif*' (*Sufi Poets of the Indus Valley Languages and Shah Latif*) as it was to include one poet each of Pashto, Punjabi, Siraiki and Baluchi languages. But in deference to the wishes of our Vice Chancellor Dr. Zafar H. Zaidi that an Urdu poet may also be included, we added the name of Khwaja Mir Dard and changed the title to '*Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai aen Pakistani Boliyan ja Sufi Shaer*' (*Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai and Sufi Poets of Pakistani Languages*).

The material included in this book is result of the research work of the two research officers of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai Chair, namely, Kamal Jamro and Tariq Aziz Shaikh. As both of these young men were my students in M.A., I had a feeling of close companionship while overseeing their work and they too, like obedient students, conducted their research and described its results in accordance with my guidance.

Kamal researched about Rahman Baba, Jam Duruk and Khwaja Mir Dard, the Pashto, Baluchi and Urdu poets respectively and compared them with Shah, while Tariq did the same for Bulleh Shah and Khwaja Ghulam Farid, the

Punjabi and Siraiki poets respectively. This comparative study not only provides us valuable material about these poets in Sindhi but also helps us in understanding the poetry of Shah Latif better.

We hope that this book will add a new chapter in Sindhi language and set the trend for comparing Shah Latif with different poets of the world languages in which there would be comparative study of, besides mystic, non-mystic dimensions.

We would welcome critical views of the readers about this and other publications of the Chair. Nothing would make us happier than to improve the standard of our work in the light of these views.

18<sup>th</sup> October 1998

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## BHITAI AND PUSHTO POET RAHMAN BABA

### Background

Before writing on Rahman Baba, the renowned poet of Pushto language, it is essential to glance at the Pushto language and its poetry. Everyone knows that Pushto is the language of the Khyber Pakhtumkhwa province and considerable number of Pushto speaking people is living in other parts of Pakistan, particularly Sindh. However, geographical landscape of the language is as follows. The area in West Asia spreading from west of Taxila to east of Kabul river bordered by Chitral in the north, Baloshistan in the south, Indus river in the east and Afghanistan in the west can be described as the homeland of Pushto language. This area was also called *Gandhara* in the past. Other languages that are spoken in the area include *Hindko* or *Hindki*, [*Gojri*], etc. There are many presumptions about the interrelationships of the languages of this region. Where scholars such as Grierson consider *Hindko* a form of Lahnda having connections, besides Dardic tongues, with vernaculars of Punjab and Sindh, some scholars think Pushto a kin of Sanskrit in the same way as some Sindhi writers (Bherumal, Gurbuxani, etc.) have said for Sindhi as having spring from Sanskrit.

Pushto is also embroiled in similar controversy. According to an Afghan writer and researcher Amin

Khugiani, Pushto was raised from colloquial to formal and literary level by scholars, who cleansed it of unfamiliar and savage elements, formulated rules and regulations, differentiated its sounds, and named it 'Sanskrit', 'Pushto' being its popular name.

A concept on the same lines about Sanskrit having developed from Sindhi was propounded by Sirajul Haq Memon. Similar concepts about other vernaculars of the subcontinent have remained in vogue. Some Indian scholars think that the original native tongues were *Prakrits* [that is early popular dialects] from which developed a civilized language called 'Sanskrit.' On the other hand, some other linguistic scholars, while terming the native vernaculars as Aryan, have advanced a directly opposed theory that they are *Prakrits* [that is, dialects or offshoots] of the civilized and sophisticated language 'Sanskrit.' However, the generations coming after that of Bherumal Meherchand Advani have refused to accept Sindhi as Aryan language. Dr. Nabi Bukhsh Khan Baloch places Sindhi in the 'Semitic' group of languages, while Dr. Ghulam Ali Allana links it to the 'Dravian' group, and Sirajul Haq Memon thinks it to be a locally born language with its roots sunk deep in 'Mohenjo-Daro'. Be that as it may, Pushto, with reference to its Afghan and Iranian links, is also close to *Persian* and *Avesta*, the mother language of Persian; and as for Persian, its connection with Sanskrit is well known. Both these languages are classified as Aryan languages.

According to the Pushto scholars' research, their language is mentioned in '*Zend Avesta*', '*Vedas*' and '*Mahabharata*'. Greek chroniclers, Strabo and Herodotus, have also referred to it.

Writing about the term Pushtoon, Mohammed Hayat Khan, the author of '*Tarikh-e Afghanistan*,' says: "A great grandfather of this community named Qais Abdul Rashid, who was of Jewish descent, lived at a place called '*Pusht*' in the country of Ghaur." It is because of his ancestry and

location that his descendants came to be known as '*Pushtoon*' and their language as Pushto with some scholars believing it to be Semitic.

According to another theory, '*Pushta*' means a hill or a mountain. Dwellers of hills and mountains would, therefore, be called '*Pushtoon*' and their tongue Pushto. In his book '*Corrigendum of a Historical Fact*' Nawab Mohammed Akbar, Khan Hoti writes that '*Pushtoon*' or '*Pakhtun*' is an adjective derived from the Persian word '*Pushteen*', which means '*ancient*' and '*high-born*'. The same author has said something quite interesting. He writes, "The word '*Pathan*' is in reality a Sanskrit term, which was used by the Indian people to denote a '*Parthian*.'" According to him, "Parthians were a very dissolute and wicked people. They frequently raided Indian territories and carried away young girls. Hindus, therefore, called them '*Pathan*', that is '*Kidnappers of Girls*'. This word consists of two syllables '*Path*' meaning '*girl*' and '*an*' meaning '*kidnapper*.'" He writes further, "Afghans and Parthians were descended from Hazrat Yakoob." Another historian Mohammed Hayat Khan, however, writes on page of his book '*Tarikh-e Afghanistan*': "The word '*Pathan*' is in reality a corruption of '*Pakhtun/Pushtoon*'.

There are also many theories about the writing of Pushto. Some relate it to '*Brahmi*' script and some think it to be the protoscript of Kharoshti and Mekhi. A few epitaphs in Karoshti script with Pushto writings on them have also been found.

Anyway, due to the close relationship of Pushto with Persian, the changes and movements in the language and letters of the latter have had a profound impact on the language and letters of the former. One such impacting movement is Tassawwuf, which is quite common in the whole of subcontinent as well as the Islamic world.

The earliest specimen of Pushto poetry is an epic

composed by Amir Krore, which is said to be of the second century of Hegira. Maturity of its language leads one to believe in the likelihood of the Pushto poetry having been composed even before it. After 750 AH we find Pushto verses composed in *Uruzi* metre, deeply influenced by Persian. Pushto poetry of this period is, by and large, in the epic genre simply because these people are warriors by temperament. History is full of their attacks on and battles with other people. Because of Persian influence, Pushto poetry is built upon the metric system or prosody called *uruz*, whereas Sindhi poetry is mostly composed in the traditional prosody of Hind and Sindh, which is *Chhand Vidiya* or *matras* (musical notes).

Pushto literature has been divided into three periods:

(1) From Amir Krore to Khushhal Khan Khatak

(2) From Khushhal Khan Khatak to the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century AD

(3) From the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards

The first poet of Pushto Amir Krore Khan has also mentioned Sindh in his poetry:

*[Note: What are quoted hereunder and in the following pages as verses are actually literal English translations of the originals: Tr.]*

***"I am like a lion in this world,  
No one is my equal,  
In Hind and Sindh, Kabul and Zabul,  
None is like me,  
I am the man among men."***

The first poet of the second period Khushhal Khan Khatak enriched Pushto literature immensely. Besides being a poet, he was a prose writer and an erudite scholar. Tassawwuf, politics, morality, sex, medicine, travels etc., all found expression in his writings. He was born in 1022 AH/1613 AD in a village called Akora Khatak. Till his time Pushto literature had come under the Persian influence so much that *ghazals* and *mathnavis* of that language were

being copied in Pushto, and symbols and metaphors of Persian love poetry had become characteristic features of Pushto poetry.

Likewise, Sindhi literature was also deeply influenced by Persian even as classical poets of Sindh including Shah Latif maintained their native tradition. Mir Abdul Hussain Sangi was the first poet to cloth the more intrusive genre of Persian poetry, *ghazal*, in native Sindhi wear. The literary rift between foreign and native became so pronounced that, after Partition Progressive Sindhi writers had to launch a movement to rid Sindhi literature of unabsorbable foreign elements. Shaikh Ayaz was in the forefront of that movement.

Khushhal Khan Khatak wrote his poetry during the reign of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir. He died in 1692-93 AD, that is, two to three years after the birth of Shah Latif. Like that of Shah, his poetry too is many sided and profound. Some of the subjects they deal with, such as tassawwuf, morality, nationalism and faithfulness, are the same. Some subjects they don't share because their landscapes and their people, cultures and traditions are different; for example, Khushhal Khan's compositions in mathnavi and ghazal genres, and his such writings as Fazalnama, Baznama, Swatnama, Sehat-al-Badan (medicine and health), and on hunting.

'*Pushto Zaban wa Adab Ki Tarikh*' [History of Pushto Language and Literature] states that Khushhal Khan has expressed his views on moral, social, amorous, epic, tragic, comic, political, philosophical, sufistic, historical and other subjects. He has dealt with them exhaustively and from every angle. It seems, Khushhal Khan had closely studied every aspect of life. Historians tell us an interesting fact about him: that he had 90 off springs, that he himself took care of their upbringing and instruction, that many of them became scholars, writers and poets, and that some of them (grandsons and great grandsons) find mention in the history

of Pushto literature. Khushhal Khan was head of his clan, and an army chief too.

## **Rahman Baba**

A classical Pushto poet with better topical similarity with Shah Latif is Rahman Baba, the second great name in Pushto literature. He was a sufi poet. His full name was Abdul Rahman. He was born in 1042 AH/1635 AD (?) at a place called Bahadur Kalli. His father Abdul Sattar Khan belonged to the Mohmand tribe of Pathans. This tribe is settled mostly in Afghanistan and the tribal region of Pakistan and partly around Peshawar and Kohat since several centuries. The native place of Rahman Baba is also near Peshawar. He took his elementary education from a scholar of Yousifzai tribe named Mulla Mohammed Yousif, who also instructed him in *fiqah* and Sufism. Kohat was another place, where he went to quench his thirst for knowledge. He visited some other Indian places several times. He was still a young man when he became a dervish and began to live in Hazar Khwani, a village near Peshawar.

Pushto historians are not agreed on the dates of his birth (1042/1635?) and death (1118/1709?) as authoritative evidence of these dates is not available. But it is said that he witnessed the reigns of Shahjahan [1627-58], Aurangzeb [1658-1707] and Bahadur Shah [1707-1712]. He belonged to the Chistiah Order of sufis. Literary critics hold that he was influenced by the great sufi poet of the Persian language San'ai because there is much similarity of style and diction between the two. A perusal of his poetry reveals that he was well acquainted with the classical traditions of Persian poetry. His verses reflect the central tradition of Sufism in Iran. Rashid Mateen writes in his book *'Pakistan Ke Sufi Sho'ra'* (Sufi Poets of Pakistan), "Rahman Baba was the greatest Sufi poet in Pushto language." Rahman Baba was and is equally popular with common people and the elite. He spent most of his time in his *hujra* (antechamber). Instructed as he was in Quran, fiqah and tassawwuf, he was not a world renouncer and attended to mundane matters and



obligations. Besides Sufism, the other subjects that his poetry deals with include morality, peace, and worldliness. Didactic strain is more pronounced in his poetry. He died in 1118/1709 and his last resting place is the same where he had retired as a young recluse, that is, village Hazar Khwani near Peshawar.

### **Similarities/dissimilarities between Shah Latif and Rahman Baba**

Both, Shah Latif and Rahman Baba, belong almost to the same era. Shah Sahib lived in this world from 1689 to 1752, while Rahman Baba lived from 1635 to 1709. Respective ages of Shah Sahib and Rahman Baba were 63 and 74 when they died, a difference of 11 years. Rahman Baba was 34 years old in the year Shah Sahib was born and he died 43 years before Shah Sahib did. Both were of sufistic persuasion. Where Shah Sahib belonged to Qadriah Order, Rahman Baba belonged to the Chishtiah Order. The subject of *tassawwuf* was common to both. As in Shah Sahib, the peoples' problems and love of fellow humans occupy a central place in the poetry of Rahman Baba. Both of them deal with earthly love as a means to heavenly love.

Shah Latif loves earth and treats every problem, every person and every object of his land as his own. To him everything from a hill to a needle is of equal importance. He says:

*I'll not equate any realm with needle, o mates,  
It covers others' nudity but not its own,  
Only a born-again can appreciate its virtue.*

*(Sur Marui)*

Shah Sahib's devotion to his own homeland is unmatched in the literary annals of the world. His love for earth is not confined to landscape but extends to all that it contains : humans and animals, mountains and hills, trees and bushes, rivers and lakes, palaces and huts, grasses and verdure, planes and highlands, seasons and weathers; in short, every animate and inanimate object. His poetry is

about common men and women. The characters he chose for his heroes and heroines came from and were popular with commoners. Though he himself belonged to an exalted class, he treated the down under as his own and portrayed their feelings and emotions in his poetry. He says:

*I too am one of the hereditary melodist-mendicants,  
Do let some of that inheritance sound in my ears.  
(Sur Sorath)*

Yet another similarity between Shah Latif and Rahman Baba is that, inspite of being sufis, they did not renounce world, nor did they remain aloof from worldly affairs or fellow human beings. They awakened the people and infused in them the spirit of fellow-feeling, humanity and truthfulness.

Rahman Baba also went on journeys though not as much as Shah, who had remained an itinerant in the company of *jogis* for three long years. Somehow it came to be believed that Shah was illiterate. But it was later proved that Shah had had formal instruction, the proof being the internal evidence of his *Risalo* and the fact that three books (the Quran, Maulana Rumi's *Mathnavi* and *Bayan-al-Arifin*) had been his constant companions. Similarly, Rahman Baba too had had formal instruction. Like Shah, he has expressed his feelings and thoughts spontaneously in simple, charming, lyrical and easily-understood language. That is why he remains, like Shah, so popular and honoured even after passage of centuries, and many of his verses have become quotable quotes.

*Shah- jo- Risalo* is considered Quran in Sindhi by the people of Sindh even today, who accord it highest impotence, respect and honour after the Holy Quran so much so that many of his devotees try to read their fortunes in its verses. Likewise, devotees of Rahman Baba use his *divan* for reading their fortunes.

As in the case of Shah, regular literary conferences and cultural gatherings are held at the tomb of Rahman Baba.

## Verses of Shah Latif and Rahman Baba

Shah Latif's verses are compiled into surs [chapters] in accordance with their subject matter and the aria or melody in which they are to be sung. Rahman Baba's verses are, however, compiled differently, that is, according to the forms or genres in which they are composed such as ghazal etc. They reflect different social structure, linguistic nuances, modes of living, rites and customs, and temperament, their only similarity with Shah Latif's verses being the subject of Sufism. It is their sufistic persuasion that brings them together, and this togetherness is what we are to deal with. Here we will present such verses from their poetry as are identical in import or represent their thinking on different issues.

Love is a natural feeling or emotion. Without it a human is not human. This feeling is not to be restricted to a single person but enlarged to include all humans, humanity, and whatever there is in nature; it should ennoble the spirit. It is a rare person who doesn't want to calm his agitated heart and mind with the balm of love. Some loves are extraordinary in that they lay down paths for others. For sufis, the way to union with Reality is none other than love,

This is what Rahman Baba has to say about his beloved:

***If my one single life were to multiply into a thousand,  
I will sacrifice each one of them in the name of my beloved.***

Shah Latif expresses the same sentiment like this:

***That lovers mount gallows a hundred times everyday,  
Should not deter you from loving,  
For love knows no bounds, it sprouts on its own.***  
(Sur Kalyan)

And he adds:

***Stab yourself first, then speak of love,  
Let agony of loving resound in your being like a trumpet,  
Grill your flesh if you seek love.***  
(Sur Kalyan)

Rahman Baba says that he leads those who have strayed back to path of love, and adds:

***I've no shortcoming save love, nor any other skill,  
I know no other virtue, nor any sin.***

To Shah, love is not a shortcoming; he says:

***Veins vibrate all the time like strings of reback,  
Beloved being irresponsive, I can neither squirm nor speak out,  
The one who has grilled me shall relieve suffering,  
He is both tormentor and soul-comforter.***

*(Sur Kalyan)*

At another place Shah says that love is not game for novices:

***Love is not a game for the under aged to play,  
It snaps the link between body and soul,  
Toss your head on spear-point to be split in two.***

*(Sur Yaman Kalyan)*

Rahman Baba:

***Be it my silver or gold, pearls or gems,  
I can forsake each easily enough,  
But leaving the beloved is not easy at all.***

Shah Latif use his heroine Sassui as his mouthpiece to declare that renouncing property and assets, dear and near ones, comforts and facilities is no big deal; if my path is obstructed by a mountain, I'll beat it into fine pieces:

***People seek wealth, I seek beloved every day,  
I'll forfeit for the friend the whole world right away,  
Mere mention of his name has me in raptures, seeing be way  
beyond!***

*(Sur Barvo Sindhi)*

***My hubby is no crook, it's his brothers' grievous mischief,  
I'll go out and look for camels in wilderness,  
O mountain, get lost or be pounded.***

*(Sur Desi)*

Rahman Baba:

***Even if I were to die loving you,  
Withdrawal and retreat wouldn't be my option.***

Shah also wishes to die in his quest for the beloved and have him held responsible:

***I've to die in any case, let me die on way to the beloved,  
So as to have him made accountable for my death.***  
(Sur Hussaini)

Having tasted the flavour of love, Rahman Baba dismisses all other flavours:

***If you were to perceive the delicacy of love,  
You will spit out as poison all other dainties of the world.***

Shah Sahib calls lovers venom-drinkers. He says that lovers drink the venom of love and the world with pleasure for the passion of love and they bear all torments of love without letting anyone know:

***Venom-drinking lovers, its very sight pleases them no end,  
They're, have always been, addicts of the bitter and the deadly,  
Latif says, separation is killing the love-smitten,  
Even when their wounds smart, they never let on to others.***  
(Sur Kalyan)

Rahman Baba:

***Better than love there isn't any,  
Superior than all others is this task.***

To Shah Latif, drinking even a drop of love is martyrdom, as valuable as worship:

***Even a drop is beyond valuation, craving it is like martyrdom,  
A playful glance from the beloved makes us pray.***  
(Sur Kalyan)

Rahman Baba:

***If you crave a high position, it's that of love,  
All the rest are inferior, which you shouldn't opt for.***

Shah Sahib likens lover to moth and tells him that love is no ordinary passion and that true lovers go higher still by burning down the burning.

***If you call yourself a moth, come and extinguish the fire,  
Baking has baked many, you bake the baking,  
Extinguish by knowing, let no commoner in on it.***  
(Sur Yaman Kalyan)

Shah Sahib raises love to a position, where lover and beloved are not separate from each other, they are one being. There can be no position superior than this.

***If you ponder, you'll discern echo is in fact sound,  
It was one just before, became two in hearing.***  
(Sur Kalyan)

***Don't call him lover or beloved, neither creator nor creation,  
Unravel this paradox for the one who masters all imperfections.***  
(Sur Kalyan)

Rahman Baba has this to say about his poetry:

***Seeing his verses so full of burning pathos, one wonders:  
Why doesn't Rahman Baba's divan [book of poetry] catch fire?***

A tale about Shah Sahib has it that he had a substantial part of his poetic work thrown into the Karar lake for fear that it might mislead people because he was aware of the force of his verses and knew that their import and reach was not for everyone to grasp. How much burning pathos that his poetry contains is alluded to by him in Sur Kohyari:

***If I were to reveal all that has happened,  
Animals will become mum, mountains will split,  
Trees will burn, no verdure will grow.***

A poignant example of burning pathos in Shah Latif's poetry is the tale of a camel man's death while humming a verse-line of the poet. When, at his insistent request, Shah Sahib completed the verse, he became so overwhelmed that he breathed his last there and then. The verse goes like this:

***This time I'll go alone to Punhoon,  
Making my way through arduous mountains, passes and peaks,  
I'll not be alone though, for I'll have love-pangs for company.***  
(Sur Sassui Abri)

This too is what Shah Sahib has said about his verses:

***What you take to be verses are in fact ayats,  
Infuse heart with them for way to the beloved.***  
(Sur Suhni)

The highest task or mission of a sufi, as Shah Latif states,

is to serve the people, to show the right path and to inculcate fellow feeling:

***Fasting and praying is all very fine,  
But the way to perceiving the beloved is altogether different.***

***Setting arrow on bow, shoot me not, beloved,  
It would be hitting yourself as it's you I've inside me.***  
(Sur Yaman Kalyan)

Rahman Baba too has something pertinent to say:

***Serve God's creation as much as you can,  
Pain not anyone's heart,  
Heart is God's heaven.***

Some Sufis are renouncers of the world, and, thinking it full of evil, keep themselves away from it. But the sufi tradition in Sindh is different. Here our sufis have played a vital role in reforming the society.

Apart from doing spiritual work, they guide people in worldly affairs and truthfulness. There are quite a few didactic verses in Shah-jo-Risalo, such as:

***Hot or cold, trudge on, no time to rest,  
It 'll be dark soon, you may not find beloved's footprint.***  
(Sur Hussaini)

So says Rahman Baba:

***One should not rest until one finds the truth,  
Even if one has to look for it all over leaf by leaf, grain by grain.***

Shah Sahib declares:

***Sleep wouldn't do, be mindful of the beloved,  
If time went by, you'll be left wringing your hands.***  
(Sur Dahar)

There is no doubt that scholars and sages reform national life with their knowledge and sagacity. It is knowledge that serves as third eye of a nation. An individual or a nation that keeps away from knowledge is, in the eyes of Shah Latif, no better than a water bubble or a sparrow hauling straw in its beak:

***They died deprived and not as adepts,  
Struck beaks, sparrow-like, into bushes to haul straw,  
Like water bubbles they were amid this valley.***

*(Sur Asa)*

Rahman Baba distinguishes a sage from an ignoramus in these words:

***Scholars are the leaders and lights of the world,  
He, who didn't acquire knowledge, is a mere body sans élan vital.***

The greatest enemy of man is the duality inside him. It is his hypocrisy that is at the root of all vices. Islam too makes this inside, that is, intent the criteria of measuring all actions. Shah Latif asserts:

***He is One, none shares His Oneness' is the only truth,  
He, who wrestled with duality, won divine favour.***

*(Sur Kalyan)*

Here is what Rahman Baba thinks of the duality of the two-faced:

***All their life they pursue wealth,  
Even then they claim to be seekers of God.***

Shah Latif warns such black hearts that this duality will not unite them with the beloved or with Reality or Truth even if they keep themselves clean and bright on the outside like a mirror:

***Face cleaner than mirror, heart blacker than black,  
Mouth sweet tongued, interior sinful,  
Hence he is never close to union.***

*(Sur Asa)*

***It isn't faith that you claim to be Kalimah-reciter,  
Cheating, dualism and Satan dwell in your heart,  
A Muslim outward but Aazar inward.***

*(Sur Asa)*

In order to make life fruitful, middle way is the best way. Patience and thankfulness should never be forsaken. Legs should be stretched within the length of quilt. It is true that one remains mostly engaged in keeping body and soul together. But there are also other problems, values, passions



and needs in the world beside belly. Shah Latif says:

***When a sanyasi stores grain and bread,  
God goes far beyond him.***

*(Sur Ramkali)*

Rahman Baba too is of the view that whatever a man gets, he would deem it little and would always be running after more and still more.

***O' mendicant, even when the throne of Aurangzeb is presented  
to you,***

***You'll not be thankful nor remain contented.***

Shah Latif's assessment of mendicant's character is directly opposed to that of Rahman Baba. He tells us that mendicant ascetics don't care for rich food or wear. The mendicants of Sindh are above such things.

***As common folk enjoy festivity, so do jogis hunger and thirst,  
Drunks keep fasts, no festivity of eid for them.***

*(Sur Ramkali)*

Even otherwise, mendicants of Sindh are a content and thanks-giving lot. It may be clarified here that these mendicants are quite different from the begging lot of today. The mendicants of Shah Latif's poetry are disciples of one or the other sufi saint and ascetics by persuasion. It was with the likes of them that he was an itinerant for three years together. Perhaps it was their patience that had prompted him to declare those armed with patience never miss their target.

Rahman Baba also counsels against haste:

***Don't be hasty for you wouldn't accomplish anything,  
If you want to succeed, be patient.***

Shah Sahib advises:

***Learn, my friend, the way of love from kiln,  
Though it burns all day, it does not let its vapor escape.***

*(Sur Rip)*

Rahman Baba exhorts charity:

***Even a single grain you feed a hungry can be  
a cause of your salvation on the Day of Judgment.***

In the eyes of Shah Latif, even giving away one's head in charity is no big deal. He is thankful that the mendicant has asked for nothing more than his head:

***All three--cord, dagger and neck-reconciled,  
That which you've come for is not worth the trek you made,  
Thanks be to God that you've asked just for my head.***

*(Sur Sorath)*

In another verse Shah Sahib has the charitable man to give in charity what no other gives:

***That you're to give away your head doesn't amount to much,  
Give away something that mendicants can show off, Deyach.***

*(Sur Sorath)*

Shah, however, amplifies that when it come to real charity, all are mendicants, the real giver; the true munificent is no one but God:

***It's only You who gives away, all others are beggars,  
Rains fall in season, You rain all the time,  
If You came to my abode, I'd be honoured even in my shabbiness.***

*(Sur Pirbhathi)*

Conceit and pride are not only in disfavor with God, but also disliked by humans even as they indulge in it and place a high value on their work, their thinking, their worship and their achievement. So says Rahman Baba:

***Those who are proud of being devoted and servile,  
Should learn a lesson from Satan.***

Shah Latif too cites the example of the devotion of the angel Azazil or Satan and says that there had been no better lover of God but it was his pride which caused his downfall.

***The one true lover was Azazil, all others just yearn,  
It was his boundless love that damned him.***

*(Sur Yaman Kalyan)*

Love ranks very high in Shah Sahib's estimation as he declares:

***Whoso spun rough fiber but with love,  
Cennoisseurs took all in without weighing.***

*(Sur Kapaiti)*

***Whoso spun fine but with vanity in their heart, Connoisseurs  
didn't take in even a single strand of their's.***

*(Sur Kapaiti)*

Rahman Baba advises people not to behave like animals:

***You're a human, not an animal,  
Do not act like four-footed, you two-footed.***

Shah Sahib, saddened by misdeeds of humans, exhorts people not to vex others or make them miserable for it is your deeds that'll remain here.

***Warmth of sincerity has cooled in people,  
Everyman is devouring another's flesh,  
Friend, nothing will endure in this world save the scent,  
All but one or two are poseurs.***

*(Sur Barvo Sindhi)*

Shah also wants people to inculcate in themselves what is good in other creatures:

***Birds fly in flocks, never lose their sense of belonging,  
Behold, they are more affectionate than humans.***

*(Sur Dahar)*

A glance at the life of sufis reveals that they are always endeavoring to win goodwill of God. Their veins are in constant intonation of the Unity of His Being like harp. Rahman Baba has something similar to say:

***Those who think of and contemplate someone other than God,  
Will never be able reach their destination.***

A task not performed or a decision not taken in time results in disappointment and frustration for a stitch can and does save nine. Rahman Baba, therefore, warns against delay:

***If you've any objective to attain, buck up right now,  
Do not be deceived by this transient life, don't let the  
opportunity go by.***

Shah has composed many verses on the topic. One is reproduced here.

***Helmsman, sleep not when harbor is in peril,***

***Coast is eddying like half-churned sour milk in a churn,  
After suffering so much pain, one shouldn't go to sleep, sailor.***  
(Sur Srirag)

As hospitality is an inalienable part of Sindhi ethos, so it is with loyalty and steadfastness in friendship. A friend is considered so close that even life can be sacrificed for him. Some friendships are formed by exchange of turbans. There are, however, such friends also who talk sweet but do sour. Shah Sahib wants such friends tested.

***Everyone boasts to be a sincere friend,  
Glib is easy but it is in need that one comes to know.***  
(Sur Barvo Sindhi)

This is what Rahman Baba thinks about friends:

***All friends in this world are faithless,  
Be friends only with him who remains faithful beyond death.***

Hazrat 'Ali has said that a state can function in unbelief but not without justice and fair play. Sufis too have laid great emphasis on justice. Shah Latif has gone so far as to say that every person should install a dispenser of justice (Qazi) inside himself so as to dispense justice outside:

***Do not chide the un-chiding, forget chide of the chiding,  
Be humble, keep it up for all the eight watches,  
Have your head between your knees, live in want,  
Install a judge in your heart so that an outside one is not needed.***  
(Sur Yaman Kalyan)

Rahman Baba has similar view on justice:

***When it's a fact that virtues and vices will be weighed,  
Why not then do justice in every matter by holding scales.***

In one breath Shah Latif talks of seating a judge inside one's self, and in another breath admits that even the inner judge would find him guilty. So he invokes God's mercy to overlook his faults:

***All that's in universe subsists by Your providence,  
Latif says, there is no limit to Your mercy,  
Not justice but compassion can salvage me.***  
(Sur Srirag)

Most sufi poets believe in the inexorability and finality of fate. So does Shah Latif. But at the same time he favours struggle, marching on no matter what. On the one hand he says "what is writ in destiny cannot be changed into unwrit", and on the other he declares, "What shall I do with patience and thanksgiving?" Here is what Rahman Baba thinks of destiny:

***Struggle or hard work cannot alter what is destined.***

Shah Sahib says:

***It wasn't knife's fault nor of pen or reed,  
Writ is out of arm's reach,  
No complaint lies against the doings of fate.***  
(Sur Sohni)

***If the hand holding the pen takes pity,  
Erases what was writ afore to write afresh,  
No prior pledge of asking the beloved.***

Sufis believe that "apprehension of divine realities" or direct communication and union with God, which is what they strive for, cannot be attained by reason, intellect or cleverness. Following verse of Shah Latif reflects this belief.

***I don't want to be clever for clever come to grief,  
It was in my artlessness that I found favour with my beloved.***  
(Sur Lila Chanesar)

Rahman Baba also looks askance at cleverness:

***Too much caution generates misgivings,  
Excessive cleverness made me crazy and mad.***

Shah Latif makes his heroine Lila grieves over losing her husband because of her cleverness and cupidity:

***It was workmanship of the necklace that turned my head,  
I thought I'd win it by claver stratagem and own it for ever,  
Kaunro's move was cleverer than mine.***  
(Sur Lila Chanesar)

It is an undeniable fact that everything is mortal, that everyone has to taste the flavor of death. Rahman Baba has this to say in this respect:

***There's no path more difficult than that of death,  
How can they go to sleep, who have to tread it?***

Shah Latif summons death so that he may follow it:

***O breath, you've too many ties; o life, go take a back seat,  
Come on, death, let me walk behind you.***

*(Sur Mazuri)*

And he adds:

***Those, who died before they were to die, are not defeated by death,  
They will live on, who lived before they were to live.***

*(Sur Mazuri)*

Shah Latif has used folktales as raw material for many of compositions. While praising the heroines of these folktales, he advises them to be careful, cautious and vigilant. Thus he addresses Sassui:

***You went to sleep at sundown, face wrapped up like the dead,  
You didn't accustom your eyes to wakefulness,  
It was your fault, don't blame it on Kechis.***

*(Sur Kohyari)*

Here is Rahman Baba's thinking on the subject:

***There are wells (pitfalls) at every step in this world,  
Therefore, exercise caution and vigilance.***

Some similarity between the poetry of Shah Latif and Rahman Baba had been shown above. Both have been presented from sufistic and many other angles. Neither has been shown to be higher than the other. Both are equally high ranking, only their styles and diction are different. Love, peace and brotherhood are the high points of their teaching and message. Both have tried to awaken people from the deep slumber of ignorance. In spite of being hundreds of kilometers apart from each other, they are closer in their thoughts, feelings and messages. Thus they are above the bounds of borders. Their teachings, though of Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa origin, can guide the mankind to the right path. Both are powerful in art and technique. But love of homeland displayed by Shah Latif in his poetry is deeper than what appears to be in the poetry of Rahman Baba.

What is written here in before on Shah Latif and Rahman Baba is of elementary nature. Much more needs to be done on the subject.

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## SHAH LATIF AND PUNJABI POET BULLEH SHAH

### Background

The land of the five rivers (Chenab, Jhelum, Ravi, Sutlej and Beas) mentioned in Rig Veda with reference to "Sapat Sindhu" is called Punjab, which has its own culture and language. As Punjab and Sindh are the two regions that constitute the Indus Valley, Punjabi culture and language have had close relationship with the culture and language of Sindh. It is because of this relationship that one finds the two regions so identical in classical poetry. Be it of Shah Hussain, Sultan Bahu and Bulleh Shah of Punjab or of Shah Karim, Shah Latif and Sachal Sarmast of Sindh, the topical and linguistic similarities in their verses are surprising.

Linguists have divided Punjabi language into two kinds: eastern Punjabi and western Punjabi. The latter, in accordance with the word '*Ulahndo*' meaning 'west', has been named '*Lahnda*', which includes Hindko/Hindki, Potohwari, Derewali (spoken in Derajat), rustic Multani and Siraiki languages. These are collectively called *Dardic* or *North-of-Sindhi* languages, whereas eastern Punjabi is considered a *Hindi-influenced* language. Some scholars, by declaring this language an offshoot of Sanskrit, lend support to the theory advanced for the origin of the Indo-Pakistan languages that they are all offsprings of an Aryan language called Sanskrit.

Some Punjabi scholars, who consider Muhan jo daro and



Harappa, two ancient sites of Indus Culture, as shared heritage, have tried to show Punjabi language as a non-Aryan pre-Sanskrit language, which came under the influence of Sanskrit during later ages. The discovery of Buddhist remains at the ancient archeological site of Taxila near the borders of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab suggests influence also of Pali, the principal language of Buddhism. Origin of Sindhi language has also been subjected to many such theories, which of them is true is concealed in the hieroglyphs inscribed on the seals found at Mohenjo-daro and Harappa, which are yet to be completely deciphered by the experts. The languages of these seals can be considered the original and real languages of the two regions.

In the context of culture it can be asserted that the regions are alike in some and unlike in some respects. This also applies to literature, particularly the folktales. Sufism is one trend that has generated much similarity in their poetry. Punjab has produced many Sufi poets of high standard. From amongst them Bulleh Shah has been selected for comparison with Shah Latif. Both these poets are similar in many respects. We will try to highlight their similarities in the following pages.

### **An account of Bulleh Shah's life**

Bulleh Shah is a wonderful poet, whose soulful verses, composed in *wajd* (ecstatic trance) and *sama* (spiritual music), can be sung by any vocalist in his own tunes. Intellectuals of Punjab describe Bulleh Shah as a representative poet of the *kafi* genre. Principal theme of his *kafis* is Oneness and Greatness of God. Like Sufi poets of Sindh, Bulleh Shah is venerated more as a *pir* and *murshid* than a poet.

He was born at Uch in Bahawalpur in the year 1680. (Bahawalpur, then a part of Sindh, had been founded by and named after Bahawal Khan during the reign of Kalhora dynasty. Traces of the influence of Sindh can still be found

there. Some famous players of the traditional sport of Sindh, *malh-a* (a form of wrestling) hail from Bahawalpur. The castes and communities that live in Sindh also exist in Bahawalpur. Many words of Sindhi language are found in the Punjabi and Siraiki spoken in Bahawalpur.) Shah Inayat Qasuri, the spiritual director (murshid) of Bulleh Shah, has confirmed this in his treatise *Tarikh Naf'i al-Salkin*. The original confirmation is in Persian, which has been translated into Punjabi by Dr. Faqir Mohammad Faqir, a research scholar of Punjab, and appears in his introduction to *Kulyat-e Bulleh Shah*. It is reproduced here in English translation:

*"Sakhi Shah Mohammad Darvesh, father of Bulleh Shah, settled in village Uch in the country of Sindh. This village had been founded by Gilani Syeds. Shah Mohammed was also a Gilani Syed. Bulleh Shah was born in his house in this village."*

Since his elders belonged to Sindh, Bulleh Shah had absorbed the cultural and religious influence of Sindh. In his days religious education was given preference. So his primary instruction was religious, for which he went to Qasur. There he heard of Shah Inayat Qasuri, who was renowned for his piety and spirituality. He proceeded to Lahore to seek audience with the saint. That he was literally overwhelmed is reflected in his poetry.

Shah Inayat was *Arain* by caste, haild from Qasur, and a grower by profession. Even though he was a non-Syed, Bulleh Shah became his disciple and attendant. Displeased, Bulleh Shah's kith and kin tried to bring him back but couldn't as he was unwilling to leave his spiritual guide:

*(His sisters and sisters-in-law came to dissuade Bulleh Shah,  
"As a descendant of the Prophet n' Ali, you're yourself a murshid,  
How could you become a desciple!"*

He incurred displeasure of his kith and kin but didn't falter in his devotion to Shah Inayat. He was so steeped in it that he had his birth name, Abdullah Shah, changed to the one chosen by his murshid, which was Bulleh Shah.

*Now say "in al-Allah"<sup>o</sup> and pray for me,  
I am now everything but Abdullah.*

Here is another verse of his in the same strain:

*Changed from interior to exterior,  
Lifted veil to display the beauty,  
Appeared as Shah Inayat,  
Adopted the name of Bulleh Shah.*

Much controversy surrounds the birth year of Bulleh Shah, but most research scholars are agreed on 1680. English scholar Mr. Osborne in his book 'Pind Pandoke' mentions 1680 and 1785 as the years of his birth and death respectively. As no research on scientific lines has so far been conducted to ascertain the dates of his birth and death, nothing can be said with certainty in this respect.

## **Poetry of Bulleh Shah**

The number of kafis attributed to Bulleh Shah is 156, some of which, according to several scholars, are not of his composition but others' because, for example, in a verse here appears the name 'Majid Arif' and in a verse there appears the name 'Kishin Singh Arif.' At the same time, it is also said the Bulleh Shah was wont to use in his verses teaching or instruction of some sage, saint or his own murshid. Poetry of Bulleh Shah includes, apart from kafis, compositions in following genres.

### **Athwara**

This genre can be called '*dinhra*' is Sindhi [or '*eightdayer*' in English]. Even though it isn't a separate and a distinct genre of Sindhi poetry, some verses of Shah Latif appear in Sur Ramkali, in which he describes day by day the 12-day long journey of the jogi's [Itinerant ascetics'] progress on the spiritual path. Bulleh Shah's verses in this genre tell of the religious significance of each day of the week. Before Bulleh Shah similar day-wise verses were composed by a Sikh poet

<sup>o</sup> Opening word of a Quranic line, which is recited by Muslims on hearing of a co-religionist's death, and means 'From Him we come and to Him we return.'

named Guru Amardas, which he called 'satwarra' [or sevendayer]. Bulleh Shah's poetry in this genre is likely to have been inspired by the Sikh poet's.

### ***Barah-mah [Twelve-months]***

This genre deals with 12 months of a year and their seasons. A verse in this genre consists of 12 lines. Earliest example of the poetry of this kind is that of Guru Arjan Singh, who seems to have influenced Bulleh Shah in this respect. His verses are captioned with such Punjabi names of months or seasons as *phagun*, *chet*, *sawan*, *bahar*, etc.

### ***Dohira***

This genre is found in Sindhi poetry since ancient times. Bulleh Shah composed two or four line dohiras on different subjects.

### ***Seh-harfi [alphabetical]***

This genre is common in Sindhi poetry. It consists of as many verses in alphabetical order as there are letters in the alphabet of the language in which they are composed. For instance, if the alphabet is Sindhi, the number of verses in a seh-harfi composed in that language would be 52, in Persian or Devnagri the number would be 35. Sultan Bahu's seh-harfis predate those of Bulleh Shah.

### ***Gandhan [Knots]***

This is a unique genre. Marriage ceremonies and customs constitute its themes. Each such poem consists of 40 stanzas ('*gandhan*', literally 'knots'), the first and last of which are of 8 lines and the rest of 4 lines each. Bulleh Shah was the first poet to introduce this genre in Punjabi language. Sindhi matrimonial songs can also be classified as being of this genre. Sindhi equivalent of the Punjabi name of the genre '*gandhan*' is '*gandhiyoon*'.

## **Similarities between the poetry of Shah Latif and Bulleh Shah**

Bulleh Shah and Shah Latif lived in the same epoch and

hence experienced the same sort of conditions, environments and attitudes. The people of Sindh and Punjab were groaning under the oppressive rule of Mughals. If any from amongst them dared raise a voice against the oppression, it was sages and poets like Bulleh Shah and Shah Latif. Wariness and struggle were the watch words of their sermons and poetry, and they let their word-arrows combat swords of tyranny. Because they were contemporaries, their poetry displays much similarity in subjects and thoughts.

Bulleh Shah belonged to the *Qadria* order of Sufism, which professes the doctrine of *wahdat-al-wajud*. Shah Latif was also connected with the *Qadria* order. Thus, both were of the same persuasion as was Mansur al-Hilaj, whose slogan "*I am the Truth*" opens a chapter of resistance in their poetry.

Shah Latif was in his late teens and Bulleh Shah in his late twenties when Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's 50-year reign ended with his death in 1707. Aurangzeb was a dogmatic Sunni Muslim, whose rule was characterized by bloodshed on a massive scale in internecine and territorial wars. He had usurped the throne by imprisoning his father Shah Jahan and killing his brothers including Dara Shikoh, whose amputated head he had sent to his father in prison along with breakfast. His extremist and atrocious policies against Shiahhs and non-Muslims such as forcible conversions and murders of their spiritual leaders like Guru Arjan Singh, Sarmad and Mian Mir Sindhi had had very negative effects on the polity. Hindus reacted by launching *Shudhi* movement in which they forced Muslims to convert to Hinduism, and Sikhs, to avenge the murder of their Guru, launched a war of attrition against the Mughals. Mian Mir was killed as punishment for his condemnation of Guru Arjan Singh's murder. He was a highly regarded saintly figure of his time with a very large following. One of his disciples was Dara Shikoh, who, like his murshid, was of *wahdat-al-wajudi* persuasion whereas his brother Aurangzeb is said to have been of *wahdat-al-shahudi* persuasion. This difference between the two brothers' persuasions is believed to have

been a cause of not only of the brothers' conflict but also of the rift between the sufis and dogmatic Muslims. The result was rise of factionalism and accentuation of Shia-Sunni schisms, which forced Bulleh Shah to declare:

*I am neither a believer, nor an unbeliever, nor a syed,  
I am not imprisoned anywhere, All of my being is enlightened.*

*or*

*Here is a Shiah, there a Sunni,  
Here a jatadhari, there a munni,  
My utensil is separate from every one's,  
Whatever I say is done by the beloved.*

Bulleh Shah was free from such religious tints. As instructed by his spiritual guide, he had to say and proclaim only truth and nothing but truth. Whether Hindu or Muslim, he had to raise his voice for him. He was annoyed with mullahs, who sowed seeds of division among people, who preached sermons to create rifts among the faithful. He thought that whatever the mullahs did led only to strife and confusion. Similarly, Shah Latif was also mad at mullahs. He has cursed and condemned them several times in his poetry. Eg:

*Again and again they read, their hearts learn not,  
The more pages they turn, the more sins they commit.*

*(Sur Yaman Kalyan)*

Bulleh Shah expresses the same thought:

*Mosque though has been your abode all your life, malice  
remains in your heart,  
Never did you offer a prayer truly believing in God's oneness.*

It was the anarchic aftermath of Aurangzeb's half a century long bloody rule, characterized by sharp divisions on religious, sectarian and political lines that our two protagonists witnessed and were deeply affected by it. The way Bulleh Shah has portrayed the prevailing anarchy shows that he had an acute sense of history:

*Mughals have drunk cup of poison,  
Robbers have occupied the throne,  
Gentry moves about quietly,  
Its true colours are in evidence.*

The religious leaders of Muslim, Sikh and Hindu communities came together in a kind of loose alliance to raise their collective voice against any and all acts of injustice and highhandedness. Guru Arjan Singh was succeeded by Gobind Singh, who took on the Mughals forcefully. Both these events, Gobind Singh's succession as Guru and his strong resistance to Mughals, move Bulleh Shah to declare:

*Neither of yesterday nor of tomorrow,  
What I say is of today,  
If there had been no Guru Gobind Singh,  
All would have been subjected to circumcision.*

In the days of Aurangzeb subverting sufi groups or gaining some sort of hold on them was considered an act of jihad and piety. Shaikh Ahmad Sarhindi had persuaded his disciple Aurangzeb that a Muslim, who humiliates a non-Muslim gains favour of God, that the faith of Sunni Muslims constitutes true Islam, and that whoever transgresses this dictum is liable to be put to death without any thought of kinship or other consideration.

Sarmad, who had also been killed during the reign of Aurangzeb, was also of wahdat-al-wajudi pursuation like his comrade-in-faith Mian Mir Sindhi. Bulleh Shah was born two or three years after the martyrdom of Sarmad. Since he was well-versed in the sufi lore from Mian Mir Sindhi to his own spiritual guide Shah Inayat Qasuri, he must know about the tragedy that had befallen Sarmad and deeply affected by it. The way he felt about the heart-rending episode is reflected in his poetry:

*As Shah Sarmad's throat is slit,  
His word goes and resonates in the sun.*

We find frequent references to Mughal atrocities in the poetry of Bulleh Shah. He has graphically described the condition of the then united Punjab. His style is sharp and direct, and he says whatever he thinks right without any scruple.

When one turns his eyes to Sindh, one finds the same conditions obtaining there. The movement launched by Adam Shah Kalhoro a century earlier [c. 1600] against foreign rule had led to his assassination. Their bids to launch the same movement were punished with death for Mian Shahal Muhammed Kalhoro and incarceration for Mian Din Muhammed Kalhoro. The latter was taken by Muizuddin s/o Aurangzeb to Delhi, where he remained behind bars unto his death.

Even though he had been ill treated and deceived by the Kalhoras, Shah Latif didn't let his personal feelings overshadow his sense of truth while describing the injustices and excesses done to Kalhoras by the Mughals:

***A gun in his armpit, wearing dirty clothes,  
Hunter climbs defile after killing nobility.***

*(Sur Dahar)*

The incident of Sufi Shah Inayat Saheed at Jhoak also took place during this period. He had to drink the cup of martyrdom [15<sup>th</sup> Safar 1130/17<sup>th</sup> January 1718] in retaliation for trying to bring about agrarian revolution. After visiting the tomb of his great grandfather Shah Karim of Bulri, Shah Latif is believed to have engaged in a tete-a-tete with Shah Shaheed and Makhdum Mohammed Moin of Thatto. The sense of loss that he felt over Shah Shaheed's martyrdom is reflected in many verses of Sur Ramkali, one of which runs like this:

***Chambers no more resound with seekers' intoning,  
Other-worldliest is gone, leaving me to grieve over the void,  
Hermits, who revived life, are departed.***

Beheading of Shah Shaheed was not enough. The Mughal monarch had the head brought to his court at Delhi so as to derive sadistic pleasure from its display. Shah Latif's reaction to such acts took the following form:

***Head is severed, so is trunk, whose limbs are in cauldron,  
May well go see if they have them [heads] ready in hand.***

*(Sur Kalyan)*



These were the days [1739], when Nadir Shah had invaded Sindh and laid the country waste from Thatto to Bahawalpur. Thereafter began the downfall of Mughals. There are allusions to these happenings in Shah Latif's poetry like the one to the historical episode of Dodo-Chanesar<sup>9</sup>:

*Alauddin came with feather-capped army and nobles,  
No one dared, who would face their arrows?  
Soomro ladies sought refuge, Chief Abro obliged,  
Braveheart died for the ladies' honour.*

*(Sur Bilawal)*

When Dodo was turbaned to reign, Chanesar being the elder [son], tried his best to have himself turbaned. After failing in all other means, he invited Alauddin to attack Sindh. The invitation was motivated by his hope that he would become the ruler and that friendship of Alauddin would stand him in good stead. [To make the bond firmer,] he offered his sister Baghi's hand in marriage to Alauddin. Taking the offer to be an insult to the royal house and his homeland, Dodo battled the invaders and, before the threat to the honour of the royal ladies could materialize, he sent them to take refuge with the Abro chief. The above verse of Shah Latif contains the whole background of this incident in the history of Sindh. As this and many other verses testify,

- 'An Illustrated History of Sindh' by Suhail Zaheer Lari has this to say about the episode of Dodo- Chanesar: "During the reign of Chanesar II (c. AD 1283-1300), Ala al Din Khalji, Sultan of Delhi from AD 1296 to 1316, sent his army into Sindh to evict the Mongols who had occupied Sehwan. The Delhi army also invaded lower Sindh and Kutch, and adjudicated between two warring factions of Sumras. This gave birth to the ballads or folk lyrics of Dodo-Chanesar, which, if genuine, contain the 'oldest extant verses in Sindhi language' (Ajwani, 1984:25)." The original ballad is, in fact, a prose-poem alternatively narrated and crooned by one Bhago Bhan, who, as court bard and trouble shooter of the Soomro royal family, was a participant in the episode from beginning to end. His prose-poem, composed as it is by one of the actors in the incident, has to be treated as factual and hence a historical reality. That this prose-poem is the 'oldest extant verses in Sindhi language has been proved to be a misconception. Researches in the recent past have brought to light much earlier poetic compositions in Sindhi, some of which have been traced to pre-Aryan times, some to the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, and some to the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. Let us now turn to what the compilers of this work have to tell us about the episode itself.

Shah Latif had an acute sense of history and politics. Indeed, his poetry has had its brushes with politics since its inception. One such brush was during the dictatorial regime of Ziaul Haq. According to late Prof. Ayaz Qadri, "Reading of papers on surs Marui, Kedaro and Kalyan at the National Conferences on Shah Latif in Islamabad was banned in the days of Zia". It wouldn't be far from truth to say that both Bulleh Shah and Shah Latif have preserved more important events of their respective histories in their poetries, and they did raise their voices against injustice and oppression.

### **Topical Similarities**

As already observed, the poetries of Shah Latif and Bulleh Shah have much in common subject-wise because, being contemporaries, they were exposed to the same political, social, geographical and religious conditions. We are presenting here a juxtaposition of their verses so as to bring out the similarity of their subjects.

#### ***Oneness and love of God***

Shah Latif:

*He's this, He's that, He's death, He's Allah,  
He's beloved, He's breath,  
He's adversary, He's guide.*

*(Sur Kalyan)*

Bulleh Shah:

*Somewhere He's foe, somewhere He's friend,  
Somewhere He's Majnoon, somewhere He's Laila,  
Somewhere He's murshid, somewhere He's disciple.*

In Sur Kalyan Shah Latif has spoken of knife. He thinks it fortunate to have knife strike one in love. He wants the knife to strike before any tete-a-tete in love. He sings of lover more than he does of love:

*Cut your being with knife first, then ask for love,  
Let suffering for beloved play in your body like a trumpet,  
Grill your flesh if you seek love.*

Bulleh Shah expresses the same thought a little

differently. In his eyes, to be cut up in love is inversion by love. He empathizes with the lover who dies in love. He accuses love of inverted move, when a lover has to bear its adverse consequences:

*When Yahiya<sup>❶</sup> took a peep,  
Mystery of love knifed in,  
Made its personal splendor manifest,  
Body blooded red with dagger,  
It was love turning upside down.*

### **Knowledge, scholar and wine**

‘Yaman Kalyan’ is second sur (literally, tune!) or chapter of the complete work of his poetry called ‘Risalo’. In it he talks about jogis and their peculiarities. Wine, winer and winery are also dealt with in this chapter. Many of the verses in this chapter are identical to those of Bulleh Shah, two of which are given hereunder.

Bulleh Shah:

*Say goodbye to sciences, buddy,  
‘Alif’ is what you need to learn.*

Shah Latif:

*If you were to set your heart on letter ‘alif’,  
Learn you would all that’s in multitudes of tomes.*  
(Sur Yaman Kalyan)

Bulleh Shah has beautifully highlighted love of God and the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) as is evident from the verse quoted below:

*There isn’t any difference between ‘Ahmad’ and ‘Ahad’ ,  
Hidden in letter ‘M’ is all the mystery.*

Shah Latif’s verse is so similar to that of Bulleh Shah that one would seem to be a translation of the other.

❶ According to Quran: s/o Prophet Zakaria and Esha’a who was Hazrat Marium’s sister; according to Bible, John the Baptist s/o Zechariah and Elizabeth.

❷ Name of the Holy Prophet (PBUH).

❸ One of the attributive names of Allah.

***But for letter 'M', Ahad and Ahmad are one,  
World is engrossed in this paradox.***

*(Sur Yaman Kalyan)*

Some of the verses about mullahs in Sur Yaman Kalyan are so sharp and pungent in tone that one tends to think that he had no soft corner for the apparent scholar. He appears to like only those, who presented religion as something benevolent and compassionate and not as something dreadful. So he says:

***As more pages are turned, more faults one gathers,  
Words are of no use, when deeds fail to make the beloved stay?***

*(Sur Yaman Kalyan)*

***They read on and on, their hearts not imbibing,  
More pages they turn, more culpable they become.***

*(Sur Yaman Kalyan)*

Like Shah Latif, Bulleh Shah also disliked mullahs and hafizs (memorizers of Quran). He too was irritated by pseudo and apparent scholars. He advises them not to sin by becoming mere book worms for learning not acted upon amounts to belittling it:

***Why do you read heap upon heap of books,  
Stuff your head with torments,  
And make your face look like hangmen's,  
Lo! you have a harder journey ahead?***

Bulleh Shah's poetry also speaks of winners' intoxication and hunger for love as well as of their determined march toward destination:

***There are abodes of drunken drinkers near you,  
Where intoxication-seekers come to slake their thirst,  
They fill up and drink cups upon cups,  
Looking at them will tempt you,  
Fill your cupped hand with care, dear,  
Lest you regret having fallen in love,  
You've won adoration of beloved,  
Who knows what'll happen tomorrow?  
Beware of going near the drunk,  
Else you too would be called a drunk.***

The portrayal of winers by Shah Latif bears much resemblance to that by Bulleh Shah. His verses invest wining with much significance as if it were a valiant deed, even more important than life. To Shah, sacrificing life in love, laying down head in the way of attaining objective are the hallmarks of a lover. The whole poetry of Shah Latif sets great store by dying in love. His lover barter his head with winers, and looks forward to sticking knife, dagger or saw in his throat:

*Pay off with your head,  
Square up with the winers any way,  
Cut off your head with knife, dagger or saw,  
Evade not death, cup of wine is more precious.*  
(Sur Yaman Kalyan)

Shah Latif's view of confining the quest for knowledge to contemplation of letter 'A' is also shared by Bulleh Shah. Personal, as distinct from attributive, name of the God of Islam begins with letter 'alif' in Arabic [and 'A' in English]. To sufis, letter 'alif' [or any other first letter in the name 'Allah'] contains within itself all attributes of the one and only Reality and hence all knowledge; its contemplation is contemplation of the one and only Reality, that is, Allah Himself. This is what sufis all over the world including our two poets believe and propound. Every sufi echoes Shah Latif's line "Contemplate letter 'alif', forget all other leaves", so does Bulleh Shah's following verse:

*Essence of 'alif' is unique,  
Imbibe it to attain salvation.*

### **Travels**

In his 'Sur Srirag' Shah Latif speaks of seafarers, worshippers, and forbearing, of travelling with mates toward the beloved, shunning sleep and remaining awake, of inevitability of death and keeping it in mind. In one the vais of the Sur he says:

*Wake up, friends, let's surrender ourselves,  
Wake up, mates, with ardour, let's surrender ourselves,  
Let there be no pause in our trek to the beloved,*

*Let's hover like a moth over flame,  
 Let's make a clean breast of it all before Him,  
 Let's retire to the One n' Only in all humility,  
 Death, fate of all, roars n' thunders,  
 Death, heard of all the time, would come suddenly,  
 Darkness ahead needs to be provided for,  
 Take all you can, much is needed for the grave,  
 God knows your shortcomings, ferrets out your secrets,  
 Whatever happens in the being, God perceives all,  
 Whoever fears God, frees himself of all fears,  
 He who is under God's shelter, peace is for him.*

*(Sur Srirag)*

Bulleh Shah also expresses the same feelings about travelling in company. He wishes to declare, to the beat of drums, holy war ('jehad') and march on with his comrades:

*This journey, this caravan is underway since centuries,  
 Make ready to join, traveler,  
 Drums of departure are beating now,  
 It's time you woke up now, dear traveler,  
 Night is gone, stars are all hung;  
 Mates, there's still time,  
 Step up, march on,  
 I say, get a move on,  
 It's time, you woke up now, dear traveler,  
 Night is gone, stars are all hung;  
 Everyone, monied or not-monied,  
 Is running towards the homeland,  
 With God in his mind and heart,  
 It's time you woke up now, dear traveler,  
 Night is gone, stars are all hung.*

### ***Feelings of loneliness***

Seafarers' life, their homes and their wives are keenly portrayed in the poetry of Shah Latif more particularly in relation to the seafarers' home, when they go abroad to earn and their consorts, left alone at home, find themselves in the clutches of oppressive loneliness begin to curse the earnings that separate them from their husbands.

*May you forget the trade you learnt,  
 Ready to sail again though you returned from one only yesterday.*

*(Sur Samundri)*

There are some verses of Bulleh Shah, which seem to have been composed against the background of sea and seafarers:

*Dearest, come to see me off,  
For I am all packed to leave.*

Both Shah Latif and Bulleh Shah speak of wives' readiness to quarrel with their husbands for being away too long. Shah Sahib's lines are a kind of cry:

*Mother, when my hubby returns, I'll take him to task:  
Why too many days away, with me so few?*  
(Sur Samundri)

Bulleh Shah, on his part, considers money of no importance:

*Money is of no consequence,  
I'll quarrel just for the fun of it.*

### **Character of Sohni**

The love story of Sohni and Mehar is one of the most popular love stories of Sindh and Punjab. Many poets have taken it up as a subject of their verses. Bulleh Shah has sung Sohni in a number of his poems. He has praised her courage in fighting the swift current while trying to cross the river to meet Mehar on the other bank:

*Terrifying roars of violent river echo bank to bank,  
Waves crash as eddies churn,  
Heavy swimmers are all drowned,  
I would be caught if I shout for help.*

Ferocity of the river is depicted differently by Shah Latif. While describing violence of the swift current, he prays God for her safety.

*River is horrible, whirlpools crashing.  
As acquas watched, waves folded over her,  
Come, dear lord, step up with love,  
Pray, God, extend a hand to lead her ashore.*  
(Sur Sohni)

Bulleh Shah approximates Shah Latif's approach, when

he turns himself into Sohni and braves the lashing of waves against his face and gets caught in the whirlpool as heavy rain falls in the dark night:

*I am in midstream,  
Waves are crashing against my face,  
Whirlpool has caught me in its mad circulation,  
Night is dark, it is raining in sheets.*

Shah Latif's description of the scene is a little different. According to him, Sohni did river crossings in winter. His account, however, matches that of Bulleh Shah in respect of the dark night, rainfall, entanglement in the swirl of whirlpool, crash of waves and sinking and surfacing of Sohni:

*Sohni stepped into river in ice cold winter night while it rained,  
Let us go ask about her for she knows how to love,  
Meher dwells in her heart day and night.*

*(Sur Sohni)*

### ***Mansur Halaj***

The incident of Mansur Halaj had made a deep impression on Bulleh Shah. Such incidents were a source of continuing grief for him. His verses on the martyr, quite a few in numbers, are very poignant and daring.

*He may call himself Shah Mansur,  
Who proclaims the mystique of 'Ana alHaq,'<sup>o</sup>  
Mounts the gallows himself,  
N' laughs standing nearby,  
Revealing many a secret.*

Shah Latif's Sur Sohni contains several beautiful verses on Shah Mansur. It is the Arab Sufi's tradition of self-sacrifice in the way of truth that captivates our poet and the way he treats this tradition that lifts it to the level of resistance poetry:

*On water n' land there's only one refrain,  
Trees n' plants are in tune,  
All of them are thus liable to be hanged,  
Everyone is a Mansur, how many can you hang!*

*(Sur Sohni)*

<sup>o</sup> 'I am Truth'



### **Character of Sassui**

Shah Latif has sung of Sassui more than any other character. Five of the thirty surs in his *Risalo* (Abri, Mazuri, Desi, Kohyari and Husaini) are devoted to her. Her travails, her search for Punhun across hilly and waterless terrain, her suffering and grief are the themes of all these surs, and he has treated them with delicacy and tenderness:

*Leaving Punhun behind, you're looking for him in mountains,  
You're striving hard because you're his wife,  
Searching for him in wilderness is wrong,  
Hoat<sup>o</sup> is not in Harho<sup>e</sup>, Go ask those who stayed back.*  
(Sur Sassui Abri)

Bulleh Shah was also impressed by this character. He has spoken of Sassui's travails at numerous places in his poetry. Assuming her character after her separation from Punhun, he says:

*They packed and rode away, leaving me behind,  
Pray, what was my fault?  
Cannot sleep at night nor find relief in the day,  
Tearful eyes overflow in streams.*

Sassui's wanderings in wilderness and highlands are also depicted by Bulleh Shah:

*Sassui wandered over hot rock-hard tracks.*

Shah Latif exhorts Sassui to take her predicament in stride, which she does and keeps moving forward to her goal.

*Though tired, she rests not in cool, moves on in heat,  
It was in Vankar that she dehydrated,  
She asks birds for directions,  
Which they do in the name of God,  
Even mark out trees on way,  
May Aryani<sup>o</sup> relent and turn back.*  
(Sur Mazuri)

In his poetry Shah Latif has made fitting use of many terms of other than the Sindhi language, which shows that he

- An affectionate name of Punhun
- Name of a mountain
- Title of Punhun

was well versed in these languages. For example, he uses Arabic through Quranic *ayats* as in this verse:

***When Aryani communed with souls saying 'kun Fayakun',<sup>❶</sup>  
My fate was determined on the day of communion.***

*(Sur Desi)*

Using Sassui as his mouthpiece, Shah Latif says that his soul is united with God since the moment He created universe by commanding it *to be and it became*. Bulleh Shah's way of saying the same thing resembles that of Shah Latif.

***My love is in being since before the moment of 'Kun Fayakun',  
A thing stolen it's not.***

Shah Latif's exhortation is: remain awake, be wary and ready at all times. He reprimands Sassui on her carelessness.

***Give up indolence, how could you be sleepy!  
They stole away riding n' reached the end,  
Strip your eyes of sleep, else you'll cry on winding paths.***

*(Sur Kohyari)*

Bulleh Shah makes Sassui conscious of the closeness of her breath (beloved) and advises her not to be careless or indolent at this juncture lest she gets lost. The message of wakefulness in his poetry conceals within itself the pain of loving, as in this verse:

***Wake up, don't snore, sleep is not opportune for you,  
Your breath has come close to you,  
Even then you remain unmoved,  
Why have you lost yourself,  
You unwary, you're not taking thought.***

When Sassui went after Punhun, she became unconscious of everything else. As her search for her beloved in wilderness continued, her zest in the quest increased. So Shah Sahib has her say:

***My search for Hoat may go on n' on, I may find him not,  
Lest craving in my heart becomes dim.***

*(Sur Husaini)*

❶ Quranic words meaning "Be, Became."

The above thought is somewhat reversed in the following verse:

*Those who ask for, perceive the beloved every now and then,  
Searchers get to see his courtyard.*

*(Sur Husaini)*

Bulleh Shah's approach in relation to the predicament Sassui finds herself in is reflected in this verse of his:

*Your friend is not separate from you,  
Tell me, who then you're looking for?  
You're in the quest since before now traversing hard and soft paths,  
Go not wandering through jungles and over hills,  
Bulleh Shah, you're yourself the beloved,  
It is a misconception that he is someone else.*

### **True love**

The present age is an age of increasing cupidity and avariciousness. Man has forgotten God in his lust for worldly goods and sensual pleasures. In a somewhat similar age in the past Bulleh Shah appears with the message of real love, that is, love of God and His creation. He turned worship into love and love into worship. His teaching consists of total and unflinching faith in the Oneness of God and losing oneself completely in that faith.

*The river of Oneness is flowing,  
Some drown n' some swim in it,  
Come n' meet with Bulleh Shah,  
He is confidante of that house.*

Both of our poets believe in the omnipresence of God. Like Shah Latif, Bulleh Shah perceives God everywhere. So he tells Him:

*You are seen everywhere,  
In all hues and wears.*

Bulleh Shah felt God closer to him than all else. His love for God is so ardent that one feels as if he had God living within him. He has composed many verses on letter 'alif'. With 'alif' or 'A' comes 'Allah', save which nothing exists. This 'alif' multiplies itself ad infinitum:

*This 'alif' became two, three and four,  
Then became thousands, millions and billions,  
Thence became countless,  
Concept of 'alif' is unique,  
Read 'alif' to attain salvation.*

Above verse alludes to the doctrines of 'Multiplicity in Unity' and 'Unity in Multiplicity.' Elsewhere in his poetry evinces ignorance of letter 'bay' after letter 'alif' or 'A'. His following verse exhudes the aroma of his litany of "Allah Allah" by which he transported himself into ecstatic trance:

*My heart is entwined with 'alif' of Allah,  
I know nothing of 'bay',  
Reading of 'bay' learns me nothing,  
'Alif' alone I find tasteful.*

Most of Bulleh Shah's poetry pertains to Real Love. His heart always intoned 'Allah Allah'. He preached the philosophy of Sufism in an age, when propounding something unorthodox was unthinkable. His style is very emotional and keen. Some of the verses composed by him in ecstatic trances are so outspoken that finding equally frank and unreserved poems of any other Punjabi poet would be rather difficult. Some historical and political incidents also find occasional mention in his poetry.

Real love occupies prominent place in the poetry of Shah Latif. He treats this human passion with loving tenderness in many of its varieties such as love of God, of another person, of labour, of animals, of rocks and hills, and of mankind as a whole. The very first line in his Risalo begins with the name of God:

*Allah, the First, the Omniscient, the Supreme,  
The Lord of Universe.*

Shah Latif has unshakeable faith in divine benevolence and support. He teaches obedience of Allah and the Holy Prophet (PBUH):

*Whoso pronounced "He is One, none shares his Oneness" with  
true faith,*

**Accepted Muhammad the Cause<sup>o</sup> with heart and tongue,  
Shall not stray to unfavorable landing, so decrees the Supreme.**  
(Sur Kalyan)

Shah Sahib is keenly conscious of omnipresence of God and perceives Him to be present at all places, every nook and corner:

**Mansion is one, its doors and windows are beyond count,  
Whichever way I turn, Lord is there.**  
(Sur Kalyan)

Bulleh Shah's thinking about 'unity and multiplicity' is shared by Shah Latif. Where the former expresses it indirectly, the latter does so directly

**Multiplicity came of unity, multiplicity-unity is a whole,  
Truth, in reality, is one, don't be misled by nuances,  
All this strife, by God, is about the Friend.**  
(Sur Kalyan)

As in the poetry of Bulleh Shah letter 'alif' represents the unity of Godhead, so it is in the poetry of Shah Latif, where it is termed a medium of catharsis, of spiritual cleansing:

**Read letter 'Alif', forget all other book-leaves,  
Cleanse your inside, how many leaves will you read?**  
(Sur Yaman Kalyan)

While speaking of the unity of Godhead, Shah Sahib has also touched upon the beauty of God, and finds nothing more beautiful than Him. His praise of Divine Beauty peeps through the following lines:

**He himself perceives himself,  
He himself creates beauty, He himself desires it.**  
(Sur Kalyan)

- <sup>o</sup> of creation of the universe. Compare: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men.... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us... From the fullness of his grace we have received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God, but God, the One and only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known." (The Holy Bible, New International Version, ; International Bible Society, , New Jersey, USA, 1978, pp. 788-89).

Sur Marui in Shah-jo-Risalo begins with words from Quran:

*When the words "Alasta Birabbikum"<sup>o</sup> poured into my ears,  
 "Qalua Bala"<sup>e</sup> was my prompt n' hearty reply,  
 At that very moment I made a pledge with my kinsmen.*

Nearly the same thought is expressed in the following verse of Bulleh Shah:

*You came, I did not,  
 A precious secret was tuned up by You,  
 Seeking response to 'Alasta',  
 It was given by saying "Qalua Bala".*

Another verse of Bulleh Shah on the craving of soul and hankering of heart bears close resemblance to one of Shah Latif:

*Pearls come out of marine shells,  
 In spite of being near water they suffer from thirst,  
 Open your eyes, wake up now, dear traveler.*

Here is how Shah Latif says the same idea:

*So long as chaste lasses stay undefiled, I'll not remain in fortress,  
 Oyster is reared in sea but never drinks its water nor of river,  
 As it looks up to rain-bearing cloud, so do I to Malir.*  
 (Sur Marui)

### ***Humility and meekness***

Shah Latif has used all those love stories that were part of the folk lore in his time as raw material for his poetry. One of these stories is that of fisher-girl Nuri and the potentate Tamachi. What moved Shah Sahib in the story was Nuri's humility and selflessness, which he eulogizes in many verses of Sur Kamoad. For example:

*You're Tamachi, lord of the lake, I am just a fisher-girl,  
 Desert me not for I am known after you.*

Even though Bulleh Shah has not made this love story a subject of his poetry, the virtues of humility and meekness do

o "Am i not your God?"

e "Verily, You are".

find a place in it. Unlike Nuri, he tries to conciliate his beloved by being humble and submissive:

*Bulleh Shah is your servant, your slave,  
He's dying for a glimpse of your face,  
He implores and beseeches you,  
Pray, come n' stay with him.*

### ***Braving hazards***

Centuries ago a fisherman named Morirrio had performed a feat of courage near the Karachi sea coast, which will always be remembered in annals of fearlessness. Karachi was then known as Kalachi. Morirrio was youngest of seven brothers and a cripple but ingenious. It so happened that all his six brothers were gobbled up by a killer whale, when their boats were sucked one after the other into a whirlpool near the coast. Morirrio, by the dint of his courage and ingenuity managed to kill the whale and to rid the fishing community of the menace and retrieve the dead bodies of his brothers from the belly of the whale. Shah Latif is likely to have heard of this feat during the days of his itinerancy in the course of which he might have visited Kalachi. The circumstances surrounding the feat and the act itself must have impressed him so much as to make him compose a whole sur (Ghatu/killer) about it, one of whose verses says:

*Yesterday the turbaned went to Kalachi carrying harpoons,  
My brothers haven't returned, it's so late,  
So wonderful a band has been sucked in by the whirlpool.*

There is one verse of Bulleh Shah, which can be said to contain just a hint of the above incident:

*Why wail and cry, feel anguish and angst,  
No joy, no pleasure, only suffering and pain,  
Done is done, what can we do, brother?*

### ***Musical instrument***

Shah Latif loved music in all its manifestations. Sur Sorath displays his high regard for both music makers and music lovers. Indeed, his magnum opus, the Risalo, composed as it is in various melodies of the sub-continental

music demonstrates his extensive knowledge as well as skill in music making. In the above cited sur he speaks with deep feeling bordering on adoration of the actors, the music maker Beejal and the music lover Rai Deyach. In the high drama that forms its background, Beejal comes from another kingdom to Girnar, the throne city of king Rai Deyach. The music maker plays his instrument before the music lover. The tune that issues from the *chung* [a metal bivalve instrument, which is held between teeth and its tongue is struck with index finger to make music] is no earthly tune, it's heavenly that captures and transports heart and soul to ethereal climes. The music maker demands head of the king for the privilege of listening to his music. Beejal's demand creates consternation among all (but Rai Deyach):

*The bard came to the palace with a tongued instrument,  
As he struck up, walls collapsed,  
Clamour all around that Beejal's demand had been noted,  
The bard had come to demand king's head,  
Junagarh would crack, palace would sink in gloom.*

Bulleh Shah, on his part, has eulogized *bansuri* [reed pipe] of Ranjha for its heavenly tunes. His diction is simple and direct, not as subtle and sublime as that of Shah Latif:

*Long and winding is the portent of this bansuri,  
Who so delved in it, found it,  
The tune issuing from this bansuri is simple,  
It contains purity of souls though.*

In his poetry Bulleh Shah has sung of music at great length. The music that he invests *murli* or *bansuri* with is capable of making man cut off all worldly relationships:

*When murli was played,  
I forgot everything,  
Arcane arrows of divine music struck me,  
N' took away all untruths of the world.*

Shah Latif wonders Beejal's remaining unaffected by the music of his *chung*, when the same music had so overwhelmed Rai Deyach that he had to cut off his head:



***Bard, there's something wondrous about your chung,  
Though you play it with your hands you remain unscathed,  
But its playing last night by you had pierced me through n' through.***

The two poets appear close to each other in the matter of their devotion to music. Both were music-minded. Bulleh Shah is said to have whirled in ecstasy during musical sittings. Shah Latif, on his part, remained in such a concert unto his last.

### ***The tragedy of Karbla***

Sur Kedarō is one of the thirty surs of Shah-jo-Risalo. It bemoans the tragedy of Karbla. Some scholars had tried to have it expunged from the Risalo but without success because when this sur is juxtaposed with other surs of the Risalo, it appears in total harmony with their style, tone and diction; above all, Shah Sahib had emotional attachment with the Holy Imams, and mourned their martyrdom in black clothes during the month of Muharram. [It was in this first month of the Islamic calendar that the tragedy of Karbala took place culminating in the martyrdom of Imam Husain, younger son of the Holy Prophet's daughter Bibi Fatimah and Hazrat Ali. Here is an excerpt from 'An Illustrated History of Sindh by Suhail Zaheer Lari on the tragedy: "After Caliph Muawiya died in 60/680, his son Yazid succeeded him as caliph in Syria. .... Imam Husain received letters inviting him to Kufa in Iraq to take over as caliph. Imam Husain (and his) little group of dependents and followers were stopped at Karbala in Iraq --- and he and all other male members of the group, save a son of Husain who was ill, were massacred on 10 October 680 (10<sup>th</sup> Muharram 60 AH) when they refused to swear allegiance to Caliph Yazid. Then their heads were cut off, taken to the capital Damascus and presented to Caliph Yazid along with womenfolk who were pensioned off and sent back to Medina." ] Sur Kedarō is an elegy, a funereal hymn ad a dirge. It is also an epic of valour, fearlessness, bravery and self-sacrifice:

***The hardship of martyrdom was divine grace,  
Mystery of the tragedy of Karbala can be perceived only by rinds<sup>o</sup>.  
Beard dyed in blood, teeth like pomegranate flowers,  
Fullmoon-like turban lies in the battlefield,  
His mother is proud in Muhammad's company,***

<sup>o</sup> Literally the drunk, here drinkers of the wine of divine love.

*Hail to the brave who gets hacked on the battlefield.  
Braves meet braves, swords clashing,  
Calling out and striking, they pile corpses upon corpses,  
Heads fall and toss, battlefield thunders n' echoes with shouts.  
(Sur Kedaro)*

The tragedy of Karbala occurs symbolically at several places in the poetry of Bulleh Shah. He speaks of it in relation to bravery and self-sacrifice:

*It was Holy Prophet's light,  
Come to be named Imam Husain,  
Cradled n' rocked by Jihraail<sup>•</sup>,  
Slaughtered in thirst later.*

### ***Clouds and rains***

Moderate summer rains are a blessing but a curse if they fall in torrents. Whole of *Sur Sarang* in Shah-jo-Risalo depicts the impact of rains on parched and thirsty lands like Thar in Sindh. Rainclouds, thunderclouds, lightning and other phenomena of rainy season as also thoughts and living together of lovers are sketched in beautiful colours. Thinking of beloved in this lovely season, Shah Latif prays:

*O my love, may God bring you back,  
Mine heart wails thinking of you.*

In the poetic genre *Bara Mah* of Bulleh Shah, there are verses under the title 'Sawan' (rainy season). This season, like all others, brings thoughts of the beloved to his mind and he proclaims:

*My God has fulfilled my expectations,  
I am now enamored of the beloved.*

*Sur Sarang* contains a *vai*, which is identical in meaning with the first verse of Bulleh Shah on 'Sawan'. Shah Latif makes his character wear pink clothes and invite its beloved to its abode. The word '*Malar*' in his following verse is equivalent of Bulleh Shah's '*Sawan*'.

*Malar has set in, I'll clothe myself in pink,*

- One of God's angels who, according Islamic belief, is tasked to convey His word to prophets.

*Friend mine is dressed to rain again,  
Roping the calves in, her fine black tresses got drenched,  
Come home, beloved, to take care of me.*

The said identical first verse of Bulleh Shah reads:

*Rains fall throughout Sawan,  
Unhappiness and gloom all disappear,  
Boys play games, girls croon,  
Colours n' hues adorn my abode.*

### ***Beloved's beauty and eyes***

Shah Latif's *Sur Asa* touches upon various shades of eyes, particularly their eagerness for a glimpse of the beloved:

*They weep and yearn for a sight every day,  
Having looked all over, they keep searching for you,  
Not even seeing the beloved again n' again satiates them.*

Our poet talks of eyes and *samis* [itinerant ascetics or divines] in the same breath:

*Eyes that look up, laughing, bring much comfort,  
Beloved removed all misery just by smiling,  
People think it be hunger, in fact pangs have made samis lean.*  
(*Sur Purab*)

Bulleh Shah, on his part, expressed the same thought in the background of the folktale of Hir-Ranjha. To Hir, Ranjha is *sami* or *jogi*, the sight of whose face frees her of all misery:

*When his face is seen, all misery is lifted,  
His eyes have gained beloved's perception  
Ranjha has appeared as jogi.*

In *Sur Khambat*, Shah Latif portrays beloved as beauty incarnate and compares it with the light of sun, moon and stars. Every verse of the *sur* is in praise of beloved's matchless beauty, especially his eyes:

*When he lifts his eyes with an amorous look,  
Sunrays become dim, moon withers,  
Stars n' pleiades recede at his sight,  
Gems grow pale before beloved's beauty.*

Bulleh Shah has also talked of the piercing arrows of eyes and what they inflict:

**Two eyes shot an arrow,  
Pierced my hapless chest,  
After wounding me, the face went out of sight,  
Who has taught you such thievery?**

At another place Bulleh Shah blames eyes for all his suffering:

***Two eyes have made me helpless,  
Surrounded me on all the four sides,  
Come home, my love,  
Heart hankers for a glimpse of yours, dear friend.***

The gems and pincers in the eyes of mumal in *Sur Mumal-Rano* are yet another example of romantic poetry:

***Mumal has gems of amour in her eyes,  
Noble or commoner, whoever goes is slain.***

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***Mumal has pincers of amour in her eyes,  
Shoots monarchs, fluttering her eyelids,  
Single glance at her suitors is enough,  
Whoever goes is slain.***

### ***Forest and mountain faring***

In his days of his itinerancy, Shah Latif is said to have experienced the travails one suffers while tracking mountains and forests. These experiences helped him describe the hardships borne by his most beloved heroine, Sassui, as she goes searching for her consort and beloved, Punhun, over the mountains and through the jungles. Apart from the five surs on Sassui, hard rocks and tangled trees also occur in some other surs such as *Khahori*. One of the several meanings of this word is: one who treks hills and bushes searching for some object of his desire; hence it is also interpreted to mean a seeker. Shah Latif views jungles and hills safer than thoroughfares for seekers:

***Those who go by jungle do not get lost,  
Those who go by beaten track are robbed,  
Those who give up both are not misled.***

*(Sur Khahori)*

Bulleh Shah speaks of jungles and wildernesses in a different way:

*They go to jungles and wildernesses,  
A piece of grain is their daily fare,  
Fools tire themselves out.*

According to Bulleh Shah, midway stop can be made in a jungle for mental peace and consolation. His seekers also walk mountains like those of Shah Latif:

*Your destination is far away,  
Make a midway stop In jungle,  
As reaching there by walking is quite difficult.*

Shah Latif goes a step further when he describes condition of his khahories after their return from a long and arduous walk:

*Their faces haggard, old leaf-straw sandals on their feet,  
They've returned from exploring a land,  
where even guides are baffled,  
The secretive reveal secrets of that far off land.*  
(Sur Khahori)

### **Love pangs**

Suffering torment and anguish in lover is, in the eyes of Shah Latif, a lover's métier. He wants lover to be smoke, then fire and then water:

*Let your heart smoke in intense love,  
Ignite fire of love to burn your being,  
O life, fire then ought to turn into water.*  
(Sur Ramkali)

Bulleh Shah's approach to sentimental love is almost the same, almost because he fears torments and pangs of love:

*Fire lit by love pangs of separation from you burnt me in a moment,  
I've gone complaining in the world about this burning of love,  
Only the afflicted does know of his affliction,  
Folks are reproaching me for what love has done to me.*

### **Spinning girls**

In *Sur Kapaiti* of Shah-jo-Risalo, woman is the main

character. She spins yarn on her spinning wheel, which Shah Latif wants her to do in good time with diligence for lethargy or delay won't do her any good before the one who matters:

*You wasted the days that were right for spinning,  
Near the spin-wheel you never went,  
How would you lift your face before the wondrous lord?  
(Sur Kapaiti)*

The character of spinning girl also makes its appearance in the poetry of Bulleh Shah. His following verse is in the same vein as the above by Shah Latif:

*In the days lost to your negligence,  
Neither yarn was spun nor was any taken care of,  
How would you keep your poise before your beloved,  
Or be valued by him for your skill, girl?*

The poet doesn't let go at this. He brings in her mother to take her to task and set her right:

*Mother has always entreated the daughter:  
Why are you loitering about like this, daughter?  
Don't be so shameless and immodest, daughter,  
Senseless girl, have some sense,  
Turn your attention to spinning, girl.*

A verse of Shah Latif reflects what is expressed in the above verse:

*You're dying for rest again today when you didn't do any  
spinning yesterday, Naïve girl, how much more your husband  
can indulge you?  
(Sur Kapaiti)*

### ***Looking inward***

Sur Karayal in Shah-jo-Risalo is woven around birds --- peacock, swan, crow--- and a reptile --- cobra. A catcher's act of snaring them is an allegory for man's self appraisal, looking inside himself:

*Bird n' cage are one, so are fount n' swan,  
Delving deep into my being to know its secret,  
I found the hunter troubling it was right inside there.  
(Sur Karayal)*

Bulleh Shah has also expressed the same thought. He too finds his inside to be a cage:

*You hide, I catch,  
I hold you tight inside my heart,  
While you strain hard to get free n' hide.*

### **Guide's direction**

In *Sur Pirbhati*, Shah Latif sings of bards and music loving lords, likening the relationship between them to that of God and a devotee. When a minstrel (devotee), who has perfected his art with constant practice unalloyed pure devotion, pleases and moves the lord (God) by playing perfect melody (showing complete devotion), the latter bestows upon the former whatever he wants, even union:

*As dawn blessings were bestowed upon bards,  
They sang rag bihag ere the munificent,  
Nothing is in my hand, it's up to the beloved to grant union,  
May poor me be united with the beloved.*

*(Sur Pirbhati)*

As he does in the case of his many other surs, the poet appropriates yet another legendary character for *Sur Pirbhati*. This time it is *Jam Sapar*, ruler of Lasbela. His real name was Pahar Khan. It was his munificence that had popularized him among his subjects as *Sapar*. He was so great an admirer of good music that he is said to have given away one hundred horses in appreciation to a bard:

*Get up, you louts, you're on call from Sapar,  
As you didn't learn hymnology,  
the lord found amusement within himself,  
"Supplicate me, I am all yours."*

*(Sur Pirbhati)*

Bulleh Shah has his murshid, Shah Inayat Qasuri, to guide him:

*Listen to what Bulleh Shah says,  
He's holding on to the rope of his guide's direction,  
"My murshid is Shah Inayat, He'll take me across."*

***Divine power***

Allah is omnipotent. His power manifests itself in myriad ways. If He wills, straws sink and stones float. Blessed are those for whom he shows mercy. All this comes through in Shah Latif's Sur Dahar:

*O master, we found your mastery a wonder,  
You cause leaves to sink, stones to float,  
If you came to me, I would be honoured in my shabbiness.*  
(Sur Dahar)

As expected, Bulleh Shah has also the same perception of divine power. The verse quoted here highlights God's mercy and pity:

*Blessed is he to whom You're benevolent,  
Indeed, he takes after You,  
It's true what the tradition purports,  
Your gesture of mercy makes the sinking float.*

The impression that one forms after comparing the verses of these two sufi poets of Sindh and Punjab is that they are more similar than dissimilar in their temperament and themes. Their dissimilarity in style and treatment is but natural for both are great poets, each unique in his own way.

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## **SHAH LATIF AND SIRAIKI POET KHWAJA GHULAM FAREED**

### **Siraiki Language and Khwaja Ghulam Fareed**

Siraiki is language of a large tract in Southern Punjab bordering Sindh and Balochistan. Majority of the people living in Multan, Bahawalpur, Dera Ghazi Khan, Dera Ismail Khan, Sadiqabad, Rahimyar Khan and Muzaffar Garh speak it with a little dialectical variation. Many communities in Sindh, more particularly the Balochs, also speak it. Siraiki spoken in Sindh is quite close to Sindhi language.

Sir Grierson considers Siraiki a family member of the Dardic languages and says that it is a form of Lahnda, the principal language of Western Punjab. Analyzing the etymology of the word Siraiki --- Sir= upper region+aiki=of -- he translates it as 'language of the upper region' of Sindh. It contains almost all the sounds that are peculiar to Sindhi language. In Sindh, Siraiki is treated as one of its own languages. Some historians are of the opinion that in the past wherever outside Sindh proper the boundaries of Sindh realm reached, Sindhi language influenced the language spoken there; Siraiki came into being when political borders of various Sindh regimes had stretched up to Multan for longish periods. Yet another view has it that after conquering Sindh the Arabs extended their realm up to Multan, the language that came to be spoken in between Sindh and Punjab was a mixture of Sindhi and Punjabi, then called

Multani and later Siraiki. Linguistically speaking, Siraiki is the natural language of the region between Sindh proper and Punjab proper, which tends to accept the influence of Sindhi in Sindh and of Punjabi in Punjab. As we find great poets of Siraiki language in Punjab, so we see many important poets in Sindh composing poetry in Siraiki. Khwaja Fareed in Punjab and Sachal Sarmast in Sindh are two of several such poets.

Khwaja Ghulam Fareed is the greatest poet of Siraiki language after Sachal Sarmast. When we read his poetry, we feel as if it were composed by a person living in Sindh. His poetry reflects all of Sindh --- its culture, its traditions, its historical love stories, its beauty and, of course, Sindhi terminology.

There is no doubt that Kh. (short for Khwaja) Fareed's verses are sublime in thought and beautiful in diction. His poetry includes some 271 *kafis*, of which 128 are on romantic themes. In 66 of these he has spoken of *Sassui*, the heroine of a Sindhi love story. He also refers to three other love stories of Sindh, namely, *Mumal-Rano*, *Umar-Marui* and *Sohni-Mehar*, the last named may be a duplicate of the one of Punjab or vice versa.

In Siraiki Kh. Fareed is the last word in intensely ardent love poetry. He ranks love very high. It is he who has said:

*My love, my friend, none but you,  
My religion, my faith, none but you,  
My heart, my life-breath, none but you,  
My Ka'aba<sup>o</sup> n' Qibla<sup>o</sup>, my mosque n' pulpit,  
My Mus'haf<sup>o</sup> n' Quran, none but you.*

### ***Life Sketch Kh. Fareed***

The sun of Siraiki poetry Kh. Fareed was named by his father after the great sufi saint Hazrat Fareeduddin

- The holiest pilgrimage site of Islam.
- The direction facing which Muslims offer their prayers.
- Another name of Holy Quran.

Ganjshakar. He was born in 1261/1845 at village Kot Mithan in Dera Ghazi Khan. His mother died when he was four years old. Four years later his father Maulana Khuda Bukhsh also passed away. His bringing up was then taken over by his elder brother Ghulam Fakhruddin, who did it with love and care like a parent. That is why Kh. Fareed took his own brother as murshid and sought his guidance in all matters.

At the time of his father's death he had just completed his learning of Quran and thereafter begun learning of Arabic and Persian. He was intelligent, of sedate temperament and respectful to his elders. His brother and murshid also instructed him in mundane and spiritual knowledge.

In his own area his name also came to the fore as 'privy to divine mystery,' which led to his brother being asked by Nawab Sadiq Mohammed Khan, the heir apparent of Bahawalpur State, "Please permit Khwaja Sahib to come this way so that we may also have the good fortune of rendering some service to him and receiving his blessing." As Nawab Sadiq's people were devotees of this family since antiquity, Kh. Fakhruddin sent his younger brother to him in the company of his maternal uncle Malik Ghulam Mohammed and teacher Maulana Qaimuddin.

Kh. Fareed became the '*gadi nashin*' (occupant of the spiritual seat) when his elder brother and murshid Kh. Fakhruddin died in 1288/1872. Though still in his prime youth (barely 28 years old), the responsibility made him even more introvert and a recluse. Like Shah Latif who had chosen the secluded spot of Bhit (sand-dune) for undisturbed meditation away from the din and hullabaloo of life, Kh. Fareed also chose a secluded spot in the jungle of Rohi, where he stayed for about 18 years. At many places in his poetry he speaks of Rohi in sentimental and nostalgic tones, which has led some scholars to speculate that he might have been hit by Cupid's arrow there. After leaving Rohi, he went on pilgrimage to Ka'aba in 1292/1883 with a group of his devotees and followers by way of Lahore, to Delhi, to

Ajmer Sharif, to Bombay, to Arabia. At all his stopovers, he paid, not alone but with all his companions, devotional visits to mausoleums of departed saints and made reverential calls on the living saints. It is said that the entire expense on the group's journey amounting to 36,000 rupees [an astronomical sum in those days] was borne by Khwaja Sahib himself as he had forbidden his devotees and followers to bear any part of it. After his return from this journey, he confined himself to his native place Mithan Kot, and did not venture out of it unto his death except occasionally on over insistent invitations. A tribal leader of Magsis in Balochistan had announced that he would present a purse of one lakh rupees to Khwaja Sahib during his visit there. On hearing of it from one of his faqirs, Khwaja Sahib declined the invitation and had the Magi leader informed, "I am a mendicant, money is of no value to me."

During his last days Khwaja was afflicted with diabetes and scabies, of which he died on 6<sup>th</sup> Rabi al-Thani 1319 AH/24<sup>th</sup> July 1902 AD at the age of 57. He is entombed at his birth place Mithankot, where his death anniversary is observed every year with a three-day Urs.

### **Kh. Fareed's Relationship with Sindh**

Ancestors of Kh. Fareed, who were tribal Arab leaders, had come to Sindh from Arabia. The reason for their migration to Sindh is said to be preaching of Islam. They were descended from Yahya bin Malik, a progeny of Hazrat Umar<sup>RA</sup>. Confirming this, a scholar of Punjabi and Urdu languages, Shafi Aqeel, writes in his book '*Punjab Ke Panch Qadim Sha'er*' (Five Ancient Poets of Punjab):

*"A fifth descendant of Malik named. Isa bin Yousuf had forsaken his pomp and grandeur for mendicancy. in course of time this high born family underwent total assimilation in the environment of Sindh so much so that even their names got dyed in local hues. Shaikh Pario. Shaikh Punhun, Shaikh Kor and Shaikh Taro are purely Sindhi names, which*

*members of this family bore."*

In those times the political borders of Sindh were quite extensive as they included some parts of Punjab, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Kashmir. One elder of this family, Shaikh Husain by name, left his position as chieftain, became a dervish and began to preach divine message from place to place. His preaching took him to Multan, where in a tract called Mangloat he established his center. From there he went via Muzaffargarh to his devotee Sardar Mithan in Dera Ghazi Khan. Sardar Mithan was also a Sindhi but, being closer to Punjab, had adopted their ways. He was so devoted to this saintly family that he gifted his vast property in the area to them, where they remained settled for some time, but the atrocities and excesses of the Sikh regime forced one of their elders named Maulana Khuda Bukhsh to leave the area and go still further to the territory of Chachran in Bahawalpur State and settle there. Now this Chachran tract by its very name appears to have been settled by Sindhis of caste Chachar during the period when Bahawalpur region was part of Sindh. Maulana Khuda Bukhsh may also have gone to live in Chachran because it was a Sindhi settlement.

This Maulana Khuda Bukhsh is none other than the father of Kh. Fareed. Among his devotees and company-seekers was a large number of Sindhis. He was well versed in Sindhi, Siraiki, Persian and Arabic. Although he remained alive for only eight years after the birth of Kh. Fareed, he might have managed to teach his younger son a smattering of these languages. Both father and son could speak as well as read and write all the four languages, particularly Sindhi, very well. Influence of the poetry of two classical Sindhi poets, Shah Latif and Sachal Sarmast, is evident in Kh. Fareed's poetry. Moreover, Kh. Fareed also mentions Sindh and Sindhi culture in his verses. All this goes to show that Khwaja Sahib himself and his family had close connection with Sindh.

Maulana Nasim Talut, a scholar of Punjab, while noting

Kh. Fareed's relationship with Sindhi language, writes:

*"Khwaja Fareed knew Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Hindi, Sindhi and Multani languages. He had also tried to learn English and practise Roman script."*

In his article captioned '*Multani aen Sindhi sha'eri*' (Multani and Sindhi Poetry) published in the December 1956 issue of Sindhi monthly '*Naeen Zindagi*', Syed Ali Multani observes: "*Khwaja Ghulam Fareed has based his poetry on Sindhi poetry.*"

Those who had accompanied Kh. Fareed on his pilgrimage to Ka'aba, included some Sindhi scholars and elders also, the more prominent among whom were Diwan Vilayat Shah, Syed Khair Shah and Diwan Hyder Bukhsh. Diwan Vilayat is the very same person to whom some scholars and researchers of Punjabi language attribute the authorship of *dohas* and some of the *kafis* appearing in the poetry of Khwaja Ghulam Fareed.

Kh. Fareed was very fond of music. Sublime music, both instrumental and vocal, had trance-inducing effect on him. Sindhi music affected him profoundly. Listening to Sindhi Sufi poetry was his passion. One of the proofs of this is that whenever Nawab Qaisar Khan Magsi, a chieftain of Balochistan, who was a close devotee of Kh. Fareed, went to see Khwaja Sahib, he took with him Sindhi vocalists and instrumentalists.

It is the magic of the land of Sindh that we see as great a poet as Kh. Fareed so much under its spell that he appears concerned with Sindh at every turn; it is Sindh that inhabits his poetry, his company, his disposition, and his cultural bearings.

### **Poetry of Kh. Fareed**

Kh. Fareed's poetry is a bouquet of divine and amorous love, human sympathy and cultural symbols. It encompasses a rich variety of subjects and themes, treated in various

ways. Its cultural atmosphere is so varied that to a Sindhi it appears to have Sindhi overtones and to a Punjabi it seems to have Punjabi overtones. Love is the principal pattern around which Kh. Fareed has woven the fabric of his poetry. For him love is omnipresent, found in every place, be it a town or a village, highland or plane, wilderness or settlement:

*Love I saw manifest in marketplace n' street,  
All enigmas stood unraveled.*

Even the natural phenomena he couches in romantic terms:

*Rainy season is in full swing,  
Thunderclouds, lightning n' all,  
Come meet me here, my love.*

He shares Shah Latif's perception: "Whichever way I turn my discerning eyes, I find my Friend present." Proclaiming his idea of the 'Unity of being', he says:

*Open eyes, witness the spectacle,  
It's the Lord in all appearances,  
Here n' there it is the same Beloved,  
All around, in all directions.*

He underpins his concept of 'Unity of Being' with that of 'Negation':

*Unity of Being is beginning and end of all,  
I killed the alien with the sharp sword of negation.*

Kh. Fareed is basically a poet of kafi, which is a purely Sindhi genre. Most of the 271 kafis that he composed ring with pangs of separation. Even as he suffers the pangs of separation, he eulogizes beloved's beauty and while doing so he refers sometimes to a mannerism or a habit of the beloved. All in all, he treats his principal theme, love, with intensely emotive sensitivity.

## **Similarity between the poetry of Kh. Fareed and Shah Latif**

All sufis share the concept of *Unity of Being*. They perceive God everywhere. They are foes of those who believe

in *dualism*. A sufi has God in mind, on tongue, in heart and only Him he hears. It is the same with Kh. Fareed, especially so because his elders were preachers of this very doctrine since centuries and hence it was a *sine qua non* of his upbringing:

***He's one, He's one. He's one,  
Him, the One, I seek every moment.***

It would be too much to expect renunciation of the world and reclusiveness from a sufi belonging to the age in which Kh. Fareed lived. Except for the years he had spent in seclusion at Rohi, he was a gregarious and outgoing person, who liked company and once in a while visited remote places to propagate his ideas.

Kh. Fareed's poetry has much in common, subject-wise, with that of Shah Latif, who had lived much earlier than the former. Kh. Fareed was a well-read and multilingual person. Given his knowledge of Sindhi and fondness for Sindh, and also because he was profoundly influenced by Sachal Sarmast who himself was influenced by Shah Latif, it is a fair bet that he was directly or indirectly influenced by Shah Latif's poetry. His following verse reflects the older poet's idea of knowing oneself, which is based on the Holy Prophet's <sup>PRUHI</sup> tradition that whoever knows himself, knows God:

***Himself cause of presence<sup>o</sup>, Himself present, Himself presence,  
Himself knowing, Himself known, Himself knowledge,  
Himself illuminated, Himself illuminator, Himself illumination,  
Himself witness, Himself witnessed, Himself cause of witness***

Shah Latif's identical verse goes like this:

***He himself is supremely supreme, Himself essence of all beauty,  
Himself countenance of the beloved, Himself ultimate beauty,  
Himself guide n' guided, Himself idea of himself,  
All this is known from one's own inside.***

*(Sur Kalyan)*

<sup>o</sup> Wajid.

<sup>o</sup> Shahood.



As a sufi, Kh. Fareed lived in the age when all great sufis had passed away leaving behind their bequest, extensive study of which provided him with much food for thought, particularly on the passion of love. Under the influence of masters like Sachal Sarmat, Bulleh Shah, Shah Hussain and Shah Latif, his verses on this phenomenon gained in intensity, forcefulness and candour. It is in his portrayal of the travails of Sassui that his ideas on love find full expression:

*The path of burning love is very tortuous,  
Hard hills have made the passage still more twisted,  
Walking and traversing more difficult,  
Don't think you'll reach your goal by these paths,  
It isn't that easy, ahead lie tougher n' harder paths.*

Before him Shah Latif had looked at Sassui's tortuous traverse more keenly and closely:

*Footholds in the mountain are twisted and convoluted,  
I called out to the wondrous in anguish,  
One of my calls did reach Hoat's ears,  
I can only call, it's for the Baloch to hearken.*

*(Sur Desi)*

Both poets have shown Sassui traversing the difficult mountain paths. Both deal with hard hilly tracts and the arduous struggle undergone by Sassui while burning in the fire of love. Khuwaja Fareed has gone a step further and added the element of intense emotion in his treatment of passionate fervour.

## **Effect of Shah Latif on Kh. Fareed**

### **Oneness and Omnipresence**

To say that Shah-jo-Risalo is a hymn to the unity of Godhead and omnipresence of God would not be an exaggeration. Shah Latif's soul was so much infused in both concepts that on the one hand he finds the presence of one letter in between Ahad and Ahmad<sup>PRUHI</sup> a paradox, and on the other he sees God manifested in every object:

*Ahad n' Ahmad are together, just 'm' stands in between,  
World is immersed in this paradox.*

*(Sur Yaman Kalyan)*

+

*He's everywhere, no place is without Him,  
Of no use are cowards who turn away from the only One,  
Ignorant though I am, I've located Him within myself.*

*(Sur Yaman Kalyan)*

+

*Plurality is unity, unity plurality,  
Truth is one let not other words mislead you,  
All the strife, by God, is due to the beloved.*

*(Sur Kalyan)*

+

*Those slain by 'Wahadahu'❶ were bisected by 'Ila Allah'❷,  
Seeing the two halves only an unfortunate wouldn't yearn to be  
alike.*

*(Sur Kalyan)*

+

*Himself perceives Himself, Himself is the beloved,  
Himself creates beautifuls, Himself is their seeker.*

*(Sur Kalayan)*

+

*Palace is one, countless are its doors and windows,  
Whichever way I look, Lord is there.*

*(Sur Kalyan)*

What is expressed in the above lines by Shah Latif was repeated by Kh. Fareed some 150 years later:

*What is Ahad, so is Ahmad,  
Heart is entangled in letter 'm'.*

+

*Ahad n' Ahmad are not different,  
Unity of being is their distinction.*

+

*Every visage mirrors the Friend, be it in the sky or earth,  
Behold, Ahaa has come in the form of Ahmad.*

+

❶ Unity of Godhead.

❷ 'There no God save Allah'

*World is a superstition, a delusion, all is writ on water,  
If you want to know the truth and be forewarned,  
In the all-encompassing ocean of unity, multiplicity is like a bubble.*

+

*He has himself contained in every phenomenon, Himself views Himself,  
In every countenance the Friend appears with allures aplenty.*

+

*Perceive the Friend in every form, no alien is there,  
Objective is to believe plural digits as singular.*

Shah Latif's conception of God is singular. He addresses God as his confidante, companion and well-wisher. He speaks of God's Oneness in many different ways. There are many verses in Sur Kalyan, which refer to Him as 'Wahdahu la sharikalhu' (He is One, none shares His Oneness). Those who acquire negative tendencies in this world are warned by the poet that their bad deeds will bear witness against them on the Day of Judgment:

*Didn't you hear 'Wahdahu la sharikalhu', you deaf?  
Or didn't your inner exhortations reach your ears?  
You'll shed tears when witnesses will confront you.*

(Sur Kalyan)

Kh. Fareed is also of the same view. He too warns of our misdeeds bearing witness against us before God Almighty. He wants us rid ourselves of ill will because God is always there inside and outside ourselves:

*Think all witnesses real, it's tale of the One Supreme,  
Perceive it as Unity what is built as multiplicity,  
Get rid of ill will n'malignity, think of Friend's visage,  
He is evident in every picture, hidden as the light of Arabia.*

In a number of his verses Shah Latif has used 'A', the first letter of Allah or Ahad, to denote His Oneness. Many other prominent poets, like Qazi Qadan and Bulleh Shah, have also done so. A tale is told about Kh. Fareed concerning this letter 'A'. It is said that Kh. Fareed's uncle, Maulana Taj Mahmood, once placed index figure of his three and half year old nephew on letter 'alif' and told him, "Ghulam Fareed, say alif"; the child's response was "Ghulam Fareed, say alif". The uncle tried three times more; the nephew's response remained the

same. Thereupon the uncle was thrown into trance and pronounced in a loud voice, "*Khwaja Fareed, say alif*". The pronouncement imbedded itself in the child's subconscious, who retold the tale several times in his youth. Speaking of 'alif' ('A') at one place, he says:

*'A' alone is my concern, sir,  
No other tale charms me,  
Alif has secured my heart so tight, sir,  
That 'b' or 'c' make no impression upon me,  
'A' has rendered me helpless, sir.*

Since Shah Latif's use of 'Alif' or 'A' is some 150 years older, it seems likely that Kh. Fareed was inspired by Shah. This conclusion is supported by what a renowned Sindhi scholar, Lutfullah Badvi, has said in this context in the third volume of his book *'Tazkira-e Latifi'* (Remembering Shah Latif): "*Research has established that Shah-jo-Risalo was a regular read for (Kh. Fareed) in his prime youth, which aroused new passions in him*". Shah Latif refers to 'alif' in his poetry like this:

*They remembered the line which begins with 'A'.  
'La maqsood fi aldarain'<sup>•</sup> is what they say,  
Right path they found n' reached the Merciful.  
(Sur Yaman Kalyan)*

## **Love**

Sufi poets speak of love in very emotional tones. Their love is pure and crystal clear. To them, love and worship are equal in worth. Kh. Fareed has even given thanks for forfeiting his life in love. Thus he says:

*Fareed received a note written by love,  
he went away leaving his home,  
Sacrifice your head giving thanks for this sweet writing.*

Shah Latif has also talked of sacrificing life for love but in a more elaborate way, sometimes calling it serpent and sometimes fire:

*Care not for head in the arena of love,*

• They have no other ambition in both worlds.

***Climb love-gallows, become a hero,  
Love is a serpent, only the bitten can know.***

*(Sur Yaman Kalyan)*

What the fire of love does to the flower of youth is described by Kh. Fareed as follows:

***What a blaze is ignited by love, its torment burns ever more bright,  
Heart n' soul are burnt out, sweet youth is lost free,  
Poor heart is bewildered, pain increases with each breath.***

In Shah Latif's eyes a lover's predicament which he has depicted in similes Kh. Fareed's languages is not much different:

***Love is in full bloom, so is pang of separation, folks,  
Even on a bridal bed no sleep comes, eyes're stricken with  
sleeplessness,  
Remaining awake at night, thinking of the master is a  
mendicant's lot,  
Intellect was baffled when it appeared to lead.***

*(Sur Yaman Kalyan)*

### **Sohni**

Shah has sung all of his seven heroines with deep feeling and sympathy. Sohni is one of them. She personifies in herself intrepid and headstrong love. If the river is flowing fast, eddies are in a mad whirl churning out white foam and waves are crashing and cracking, so what, Sohni would step in and swim across even on an unbaked pitcher to meet her beloved Mehar. It is her irrepressible spirit that moves Shah Latif to say:

***Neither looks for easy entry nor descends in haste,  
Craving Sahar, she has him ever in mind,  
Eddies in dark night have had her apprehensive,  
River is of no account to the one who carries love-pangs.***

*(Sur Sohni)*

Sohni's passion and the night being dark are also spoken of by Kh. Fareed but he has her suffer hardships of Rohi, the wood where he had gone in seclusion in his prime youth:

*I've braved wilds n' woods, Rohi<sup>o</sup> n' Ravi<sup>o</sup>,  
 Roaming in pains n' travails, o friend,  
 My heart is heavy with pangs of separation, o friend,  
 Love of Mahiwal has me afloat in rapids.  
 Me poor suffering lass, o friend,  
 In this ugly dark night, o friend.*

Kh. Fareed has also shown deep sympathy for Sohni. He has narrated her hardships and sufferings as if they were his own. Where he characterizes her as helpless and weakling, Shah Latif depicts her as brave and strong. It is the two poets' assessment of the Sohni's character that distinguishes one from the other. Weak and spiritless as she is, Kh. Fareed lets her abandon herself to her fate.

*Truth of the matter is,  
 Whole life went by in search,  
 Not a thing of Mahiwal came in the know,  
 Helpless wretch was flown away by the current.*

In contradistinction Shah Latif says:

*So long as she was alive, she did not sit idle,  
 Though dead, she drifted with waves unto Mehar.  
 (Sur Sohni)*

Grief and distress, suffering and sorrow are prominent features of Kh. Fareed's poetry. To call him 'poet of pain' would not be an exaggeration. His dolorous approach is evident in the following verse in the context of Sohni:

*Life is enveloped in sorrows,  
 Distress is stuck, felicity has quarreled away,  
 River of torment is in high flood,  
 Whirlpools in hundreds, waves in lakhs eddy n' crash.*

Shah Latif's Sohni though in the clutches of river's fury, remains hopeful of uniting with Mehar:

*Horriifying river, where whirlpool is crashing,  
 As aquatics watch, waves fold over her,  
 Step up, my love Sahar, with affection,  
 O Guide mine, extend your hand, lead me out of the deep.  
 (Sur Sohni)*

<sup>o</sup> The jungle near Mithankot, where the poet found seclusion.

<sup>e</sup> One of the five rivers of Punjab.

### **Sassui**

Sassui is another female, whose courage and unwavering spirit Shah Latif was impressed with more than that of Sohni. Her barefoot walks through woods and wildernesses and over hard rocks to recover her kidnapped foreigner sweetheart and husband as well as her prayed for death to protect her chastity were admired by the poet so much that he devoted one sixth of his magnum opus to her, four times more than to any other of his heroines:

*Sans support, sans aid, I am frail n' unfamiliar,  
It was to die that I fell in love with an outlander,  
Syed says, you are her support in straits,  
Imbecile, how can you crave without any provision.*  
(Sur Sassui Abri)

As Shah Latif in Sindhi, so Kh. Fareed in Siraiki has sung of Sassui more than of any other of his female characters. About 66 of his kafis are related to her. He too has spoken of the outlander beloved.

*My eyes are entangled abroad, o friend,  
My heart is soured with homeland, o friend,  
These sillies do not know  
What sharp edged swords of love-pangs  
Are hanging over the lovesick, o friend.*

Sassui's barefoot trek through rough and rocky terrain had her feet blistered and her body exhausted. Kh. Fareed tells of her heart rending march toward her goal:

*Dolorous, tearful, braving hot winds,  
She walks on over pricking burning rocks.*

Shah Latif also says the same thing but with the difference that his Sassui is neither tearful nor regretful. On the contrary, he shows her trudging on:

*Even if countless thorns prick my feet,  
Finger may be too sore to touch thumb, cliffs tear feet,  
I'll will push on toward my love even without footwear.*  
(Sur Mazuri)

Nowhere in Shah-jo-Risalo is there even a suggestion of

slur on the honour or dignity of woman. All his women are dignified even in their conjugal love. There is nothing lewd about them. This is how Sassui recalls a facial feature of Punhun:

*I, eyeless woman, have eyes of Ari Jam,  
They'll make me see trees of Vindur<sup>o</sup>,  
N' have me see, as they do themselves, the forehead of Punhun.*  
(Sur Sassui Abri)

+

*Medicine can't relieve the pain induced by tresses,  
The tresses that at I saw yesterday dangling gracefully on checks.*  
(Sur Sassui Abri)

Kh. Fareed's approach to the facial features is like this:

*Without you the whole country is dark,  
Come, lie on chest, dear,  
Make your home in eyes, o friend.*  
+  
*Heart is now lost to pains, o friend,  
It is high time you met me, o friend,  
Black tresses, compressing like snakes, are stinging me fatally,  
o friend,  
Blood streams are flowing from every hair on body, o friend.*

Yet another evidence of Shah Latif's influence on Kh. Fareed is his use of the same terms like 'Barochal' (an affectionate form of Baloch, the nationality of Sassui's sweetheart Punhun), 'jatt' (camel-man/rider) and 'doongar' (mountain or hill) used by his predecessor in relation to the love story 'Sassui-Punhun':

*Arrow was right on target,  
It pierced her heart and being,  
She now wanders about in hills n' 'doongars',  
For her beloved 'Barochal'.*

Shah Latif tells off mountain for its hardness and cutting sharpness of its rocks:

*Mountain, you're hard; excessor, you commit excesses,  
Like hewer cuts tree, so you saw my body,*

<sup>o</sup> Name of a hill and hill-torrent in Lasbela, Balochistan.



***It's all doing of fate, else who would walk rocks.***

*(Sur Kohyari)*

Kh. Fareed also speaks of the hardness and harshness of mountain with reference to Sassui's love-lorn journey:

***Treks of burning love are hard,  
Narrow defiles in harsh mountains,  
Twisting paths in dense woods,  
Jutting rocks are all to be crossed,  
Lets you think it a free or cheap deal.***

Leaving the narrow defiles and the twisted paths alone, Kh. Fareed brings in a companion for Sassui to share her woes with:

***Weeping, Sassui asks camel to sit down,  
"Let's talk of comforts n' discomforts,  
So long as I breathe, I'll keep searching for camel men".***

Long before Kh. Fareed, Shah Latif had viewed the animal from a more personal angle:

***Beloved's dart hit me, camels went under,  
The dew that discomforts camels may not fall on them,  
Sight of outlanders is a feast for eyes.***

*(Sur Husaini)*

True, mountain is hard but iron is harder, and Sassui, so says Shah Latif, with her iron like limbs would not let its hardness deter her, nor would she mind asking it for direction:

***What can you do to the suffering by heating up, mountain,  
If you're rock of Pabb, my limbs too are iron,  
No blame lies to anyone else, it's just my fate.***

*(Sur Kohyari)*

+

***I can't bear Hoat's going, am myself unable to go,  
God, let this Arijas' slave find their track,  
Highlander sheep men, I ask you the whereabouts of my  
beloved,  
It was her sleepy eyes that have brought the wench to this pass.***  
*(Sur Kohyari)*

Kh. Fareed, on the other hand, does not consider sleep as

neglect but blissful exhaustion after her love night with Punhun responsible for Sassui's predicament :

*I slept sweet with Punhun, camelmen showed me no sympathy,  
They took him away by train of camels to imprison him in Kech<sup>o</sup>,  
They're now quite happy in their homeland, oversleeping is my ruin,  
I've even lost my comeliness, both body n' mind are numb.*

Shah Latif, however, puts the blame squarely on Sassui for her sleep:

*You went to sleep at dusk, face wrapped up like the dead,  
Kept your eyes unaccustomed to wakefulness,  
It was your fault that you're blaming on Kechis.*  
(*Sur Kohyari*)

Kh. Fareed's Sassui calls her sleep a lame excuse:

*Head is heavy with love-pangs,  
Which have had me disgraced all over,  
My life is spent in weeping with no hint of goal,  
Heart is immersed in the grief of friend's separation,  
Your heart-loser's way is to earn sorrows n' gain pains,  
Punhun is gone without telling to a Kech unknown,  
It all is beloved's deliberate act,  
I've to live with the lame excuse of sleep.*

From their respective descriptions of Sassui's walk through woods and across mountains it seems that both the poets had had personal knowledge of what one comes across in the course of such a trek. Shah Latif is likely to have gained his knowledge during his years long itinerancy with jogis, and Kh. Fareed during his seclusion in Rohi. Here are two glimpses of what ahead for Sassui.

Shah Latif:

*There are many winding paths, numerous narrow gorges,  
What can these do to those who're face to face with Truth?*  
(*Sur Desi*)

Kh. Fareed:

*Heart hankers after darling Punhal,  
Harsh is mountain, paths twisted,  
Union has become too costly,  
Ears now hear all around sound of his caravan.*

<sup>o</sup> Native place of Punhun and his brothers; Kechi=of Kech.

## Marui

Due to his connection with Sindh, Kh. Fareed has appropriated many love stories of this land including that of Umar-Marui as subjects of his poetry. He has prayed through Marui for sand-dunes, wildernesses and dry planes of Thar to prosper and thrive. When he speaks of Malir, he speaks of Rohi also:

*Rohi was going the way of Malir,  
Its fortune has been turned.*

He was very anxious for rainfall over Malir. He is very sentimental about it and Marui's captivity. At one place he is pleased that rains have fallen in Malir, the homeland of Marui:

*God has poured rains over Malir,  
All inhabitations are joyous.*

Shah Latif tells of Malir-dwellers attitudes vis-à-vis rainfall:

*They go n' build their sheds, where rain falls,  
Predicament I am in they don't seem to realize,  
Pehaps I am forgott'en as they're busy making both ends meet.  
(Sur Marui)*

Even as he sights banks of rainfull black clouds headed for Malir, Kh. Fareedi does not appear to have any concern with the thrust of the folk-tale, love for one's homeland, for in one of his kafis he says:

*My darling, which Malir you're gone to leaving me alone?  
Come back for walking these paths is very difficult,  
Engrossed in your love, I stumble at every step,  
Rains have fallen over Rohi, verdure is growing,  
Cows are delivering calves in hundreds,  
Even dried up cows are now milkful n' pasturing,  
Here in Sindh I am in turmoil,  
If it were in my power, I would run away to Rohi,  
I lie awake weeping whole nights dogged by these pains n' pangs.*

Kh. Fareed's portrayal of Marui's character is not as prominent as his preoccupation with juxtaposing Rohi with

Malir. His Malir is, in fact, a representation of the Rohi jungle. Unlike Shah Latif, he does not allegorise the folktale of Umar-Marui, nor does he invest it with any spiritual import. There is no symbolism, just a forceful expression; that is all. It can, nevertheless, be said that Kh. Fareed loved countryside, particularly its wild, natural aspects. He preferred trees, bushes and sand-dunes over towns and cities, wild plants over garden flowers, dust over musk and perfume:

*Country of Malir wal's in charm, its lano<sup>o</sup> rakes high among plants,  
Dust-folk mock saffron, musk n' ambergris.*

This is realism at its best. It is hallmark not only of Kh. Fareed but also of his predecessor poet Shah Latif, whose following verse is as realistic as the one quoted above:

*Where rugs, blankets, saddlebag, huts, paka<sup>o</sup> n' pakk<sup>o</sup> are,  
There my mates are happy beside their consorts,  
Would that I enjoy eating with my Marus<sup>o</sup> makk<sup>o</sup>,  
N' greet folks amid thuhars<sup>o</sup> as a Thar-born lass.*

(Sur Marui)

Like Shah Latif, Kh. Fareed has also spoken of *Maru* in relation to Marui but with a difference. Where Shah Sahib uses it for natives of Malir and hence compatriots of Marui, Khwaja Sahib uses it for consort or beloved of Marui:

*Leaving me behind, Maru has gone to Malir,  
No word has come from him,  
I am wandering from place to place like a vagrant.*

+

*Leaving me behind, Maru has gone to Malir,  
It is fate that is separating us.*

+

*Leave rainfalls of Malir, Maru,  
Come here yourself<sup>e</sup> or send for me.*

Shah Latif's use of the term Maru remains different from that of Kh. Fareed:

- A kind wild plant of sandy Thar in Sindh.
- Ripe fruits of wild sandy plants.
- Ripe fruits of wild sandy plants.
- Dwellers of Malir.
- Ripe fruits of wild sandy plants.
- Thorny plant opuntia of Thar.

***I accept Maru as mine, wherever they be,  
Mates mine pick gourds aplenty in Malir,  
When will my cry pull the fortress down?***

*(Sur Marui)*

Besides Maru, Kh. Fareed has made use of so many other Sindhi terms and techniques as well as characters in his kafis that they seem to diffuse the fragrance of Sindhi culture. The word 'ijho' (now, presently, soon), 'Maru', 'mandi', (weary, depressed, tired), 'bandi' (slave, prisoner, maid), 'wandi' (unemployed, at leisure, having nothing to do, free), 'tangh' (anxiety, longing, urge) and 'pandhi' (pedestrian, walker, foot-traveler) occurring in the Siraiki original of the following lines are Sindhi words and so is its perspective:

***Don't you be depressed, You'll soon meet Maru,  
Burn the bed of roses, join your sweetheart,  
You already are slave to your love, now be slave to wilderness,  
Rid your heart of all but the beloved,  
Longing urges Fareed to walk toward lowland.***

### **Mumal-Rano**

Mumal, lady of 'Kak' palace (which was built on the bank of Kak river and hence named after it), is the beauty, whom all princes and young men, near and far, wish to win over but cannot save Rano, who does after defeating all her stratagems. But before Rano appears on the scene, many have come and lost their hearts and riches to the famed beauty:

***Let's get on the Kak landing, where love is forged,  
Day n' night, everyone can perceive the beloved.***

*(Sur Mumal-Rano)*

As his verses reveal, the legend of Kak had also made a deep impression on the mind of Kh. Fareed:

***I am wearing the bangle of separation, pangs of love,  
Issued by the circuit of Kak river.***

He tells of Mumal's condition after Rano leaves her under the misimpression of her unfaithfulness:

***Bangle-wearing arms now look like those of a widow,  
Flower garlands seem to be made of thorns.***

Shah Latif also draws a similar picture of Mumal as she awaits her beloved:

*Rano, I cry when I see bedchambers,  
There's dust on cots, beds are too old,  
Pillows are dustful without you to rest your head on,  
Places, flowers, fragrance, trees all have withered in your  
absence,  
O Mendhro, my charms are a waste without you.*  
(*Sur Mumal-Rano*)

Shah Latif's exposition of love-loron condition of Mumal in her separation from her sweetheart Rano is powerfully charged:

*Kak burns, trees wither, palatial mansions are aflame,  
After you left my heart is afflicted with dreads, love,  
Fulfill promptly the promises you made, darling.*  
(*Sur Mumal-Rano*)

If Kh. Fareed were to express similar sentiments, he would versify them as under:

*Heart is burnt to ash; anguish is coursing through vein to vein,  
Can there be a hell other than a hundred-tongue blaze inside  
one's chest!*

+

*My sweet people of Kak,  
Would that Rano came at night.*

Love, soul-consuming love, is which makes sufis vibrant, and when a vibrant sufi sings of love, he sings the way these two sufi poets, one of Sindh and the other of southern Punjab, sing, with abandon and total absorption.

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## SHAH LATIF AND BALOCHI POET JAM DURUK

### Background

Before writing on Balochi poetry one may say a few words about Balochi language. Besides Balochistan, it is also spoken in Sindh and Punjab. Main reason of its spread is the migratory tribes of Balochistan, who head for Sindh and Punjab especially in winter. Some of them do not return but settle down in the host lands. This has been going on since centuries. It is their characteristic that where ever they settle down, they adopt themselves to the new environment and become one with the natives. There are many Baloch tribes settled in Sindh, who have left their own language and culture and adopted Sindhi language and culture. Apart from Pakistan, Balochi is also spoken in Iran, where there is a large tract also called Balochistan. Balochi is closely related to other languages such as Sindhi, Urdu, Persian, Punjabi, etc. Most Baloch tribes are either bilingual or trilingual. The Baloch tribes living close to the Sindh-Balochistan border speak, beside Balochi, Sindhi, those within the borders of Punjab speak Punjabi and those inside Iran speak Persian. It is because of this that these languages have influenced Balochi language and have been influenced by it. Because Persian has exerted much greater influence on it than any other of these languages, Baluchi is generally considered an offshoot of Persian. But linguists reject this thinking. Fazal Muhammed Behan writes in his Sindhi article '*Balochi Boli-a ji Irtiqa*' [Evolution of Baluchi Language, daily '*Jago*', Karachi, 14.09.1991]:

*"There is a big family of Aryan languages. The Indo-Iranian group of languages is a branch of the Aryan family, and Balochi belongs to this Indo-Iranian branch and is close to another language of this branch, the Kurdish. Since it has many similarities with Persian Balochi is commonly misunderstood to be a distorted version of that language. Linguists have dispelled this misunderstanding. History tells us that Balochi originated at the south-east coast of Caspian Sea. Kurdish also arose there."*

The word 'Baloch' has been pronounced variously in different periods. Some of these pronunciations are still in use. In Sindh a Baloch is also called 'Baroch' and 'Balosh'. The author of the book *'Balochi Adab, Balochi Saqafat'* [Balochi Literature, Balochi Culture], Saleem Khan Gammi has mentioned some more variations of the word '*Baloch*'. These are: '*Ba'al*', '*Baloas*', '*Baloe*', '*Ba'aloth*', '*Beoth*', '*Ba'alose*', and '*Bailoe*'. He adds: "Genealogically, '*Baloas*' was title of Namrud, the first king of Babylonia. He was venerated as '*Sungod*'. He is the same Namrud, who had had a pyre blazed for Hazrat Ibrahim." Sardar Muhammed Khan Gishkori writes in his [Urdu] book *'Balochi Nasl aur Balochistan ki Tarikh'* [Baloch Race and History of Balochistan], "*Baloas* was the second king of Babylonia after Namrud." Anyway, the word Baloch is considered an Iranian corruption of the word '*Baloas*'. It is also said that Baloch people are originally from the valley of *Baloas*, which is located near Aleppo in the Syrian Valley on the Iranian border.

In view of the Baloch nation being mostly migration-minded, they are likely to have started, long ago, composing lyrics for singing so as to relieve the drudgery of long treks across harsh terrains. But it is unfortunate that, like Sindhis they were unable to preserve the record of their centuries-long creativity in the field of literature. As in the case of Sindh, it was the overseas foreigners, who made a concerted effort to devise a script for the Balochi language and compile its literature. Dr. Ernest Trump, the very same German



missionary who discovered Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, the lustrous gem of Sindhi poetry, for the world and published a concise Risalo from Germany, did a similar service to Balochi language by giving orderly structure to it in the shape of grammatical rules and regulations. In 1840, an English soldier, Leut. Leach published his translation of some Balochi poems in the journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal. Similarly, Burton included translation of three Balochi poems in his book '*Sind Revisited*'. English officer Demes brought out a Balochi text book. The English initiative motivated the natives, who began to take interest in their language and letters, as a result of which many writers and poets appeared and are continuing to appear on the scene. Those who have written on Balochi poetry and prose include Mir Khuda Bukhsh Khan Bijarani, Mir Mitha Khan Marri, Saleem Khan Gammi, Anjum Qizilbash, Atta Shad and others.

The greatest tragedy with Balochi language is that inspite of being an old and rich language it has no script of its own but that of Arabic. The language is quite rich in folk literature, folk songs and verses of ancient poets.

Whenever they speak another language like Sindhi or Urdu, Balochi speakers tend to turn masculine into feminine and feminine into masculine. In these two and some other languages, change in subject alters the predicate also. For example, if in the Sindhi sentence '*chhokro khhede tho*' (boy is playing) the masculine gender is changed to feminine, the sentence will read '*chhokri khhede thi*' (girl is playing). It is not so in Balochi language, where change in the gender of subject does not lead to change in predicate. In Balochi sentence '*bachak ravat*' (boy is going) change of '*bachak*' (boy) to '*janak*' (girl) would not change the predicate '*ravat*'.

As there are different dialects in Sindhi language like *Utradhi* (northern), *Larri* (Larr's, or southern), *Kohistani* (hilly region's) and *Vicholi* (mid region's), etc. so it is with Balochi language. Its dialects are also regional. Dialects of Balochi are distinctive from one another to the extent of

influence they have absorbed from the native languages of various geographical regions where it is spoken. Balochi may, therefore, be said to have an Irani dialect, a Punjabi dialect, a Sindhi dialect, and so on so forth. These regional influences, Balochi consists of two main dialects, the western and the eastern. The Balochi spoken in western part of Balochistan is inflexionally different from the Balochi spoken in the eastern part, and each is easily understood in the other. Each may, however, contain some words that the other does not, or some words, common to both, may differ from each other in pronunciations.

For its development and vitality, Balochi language needs, more than anything, its own independent script, compilation of its scattered literary creations and making it a medium of instruction.

## History of Balochi Prose and Poetry

When we try to trace the history of Balochi literature, we find its definitive beginning in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Like all literatures of the world, Balochi literature also started with poetry. Mir Mitha Khan Marri writes in his book '*Durchin*' (pp. 25) that, according to authoritative traditions, Balochi poetry made its start in 1450 AD.

Sindhi poetry, which is much older than Balochi poetry, is traced to Arab period. But formalized Sindhi poetry was begun during the Sumra Period (1050-1350 AD), which was generally composed by wandering minstrels. The *ginans*<sup>o</sup> of

- 'Desite repeated defeats on the political front, the Ismaili faith survived in Sindh because of their dais (missionaries), who were accredited agents of the Imam, authorized to teach and accept oaths of allegiance from converts. They conveyed their message in symbols which would be acceptable to both Muslims and non-Muslims and composed ginans (religious verses) to enable their followers to memorize them. The earliest ginans were composed by Pir Satguru Nur (Pir Nur al-Din) who died in AD 1079, in a mixture of Hindi, Marathi, and Gujarati. "Perhaps that was the form of Sindhi spoken in Sindh at that time" (Allana, 1978; 14). Another famous Ismaili poet was Pir Shams Sabzwari who died in AD 1276. His verses are full of Siraiki words and phrases. The reputation of his great-great grandson, Pir Sadr al-Din, who died in AD 1409, exceeded them both

Pir Saddruddin also belong to this period. However, the first acknowledged Sindhi poet Qazi Qadan came on the scene during the Samma Period. He too was of 15<sup>th</sup> century, hence both Sindhi and Balochi poetry can be said to have formally begun during the same period. Cultural and social affinity between Sindh and Balochistan has existed since centuries. But one wonders at the difference in the themes of their earliest formal poetry. Where the first formal poet of Sindhi, Qazi Qadan, chose Sufism as his theme, Balochi poetry begins with war as its theme. The main reason for such beginning of Balochi poetry is that Balochistan's society is riven by tribal feuds, which drives them to make wars on each other. Such wars sometimes last several years like those of Arab tribes. It is true, in some measure, even today. This Balochi tradition closely resembles that of the Arabs because both these peoples live in tribal societies. As each Arab tribe used to have its own poets for eulogizing the exploits of its heroes, Baloch tribes too had their own epic poets for urging their warriors on. A few of their poets, however, condemned such futile and unending fights and favoured peace, fellow-feeling and love. A Baloch tribal poet, before reciting his verses, would mention his own or his tribe or both like this:

(1) Mir Chakar Khan Rind says .....

(2) Gurgiz tribe's Balach says .....

Mir Chakar Khan Rind, Guhram Lashari, Heutan and Noad Bandakh are recognized as the first and high-ranking epic poets of Balochi language. They existed in the 15<sup>th</sup> century AD. They composed their verses for ending the war between the Rind and Lashar tribes. Romantic poets of Balochi language, viz. Shah Murid, Beorakh Rind, Rehan, Qavil Jatt and Lango also appeared in the same period. Shah Murid is considered foremost among the classical poets of amorous poetry. After falling in love with Hani, he progressed from worldly love to divine love. His verses are

as poet and preacher. His ginans are written in the Khojki script and are considered the oldest extant documents of Sindhi religious literature (Schimmel, 1986; 55). Excerpted by the translator/editor from 'An Illustrated History of Sindh', Suhail Zaheer Lari; 73, 75.

so charged with pathos and love-lornness that he is known as Mir Taqi Mir of Balochi language. Shah Murid and Beorakh were such versatile poets that those who came after them emulated them.

Emergence of a large number of Balochi poets in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries constitutes a poser: How did it become possible; were they products of a poetic tradition continuing from the past, whose earlier poets remained unknown to chroniclers, if there existed such a breed at that time?

Another great name in the field of Balochi poetry is Jam Duruk. He appeared two centuries later. Mitha Khan Marri has this to say about him: "In the 18<sup>th</sup> century AD we hear sad and heart-rending voice of a poet who, besides being as versatile as Shah Murid and Beorakh, possesses his individual style. That sweet lyrical voice is that of Jam Duruk" (pp. 34).

Before writing about Jam Duruk, an overview of the boundaries of Balochi language, culture and Balochistan is presented hereunder.

## **Relations between Balochistan and Sindh**

Area-wise Balochistan is the largest province of Pakistan at present. Besides being fellow traveler of Sindh in cultural and social fields, it has a long border with its eastern neighbor and a large portion of its territory was a part of Sindh in the past. An extension of Balochistan was and is part of its western neighbour Iran. Saleem Khan Gammi tells us: "According to old chronicles, Nadir Shah Afshar was the first person to name the Quetta and Qalat Divisions as *Balochistan*. In Avesta, Balochistan is given the name of *Pishin Valley*. Greek chroniclers called it *Maka*, which name also occurs in the Behistun inscriptions for Balochistan. The empire of the Persian monarch Darius the Great comprised 127 provinces, one of which was *Maka*. Later *Maka* came to be known as *Makra*, which some chroniclers knew as *Mekia*. *Gedrosia* is yet another name by which Balochistan was

known to some other chroniclers, Chinese travelers called it *Zengla*." (op. cit. pp. 14-15)

Some kings of Sindh had also ruled over Balochistan. In 635 AD Raja Chach of the Brahman Dynasty of Sindh had conquered Balochistan, fixed its boundaries and had fortresses built for its defense. In 712 when Muhammad bin Qasim invaded Sindh and terminated the native rule over the country, Sindh's sway over Balochistan also ended. Dr. Ghulam Ali Allana writing about the Sindh-Balochistan relations in his Sindhi book '*Sindhi Boli-a ji Lisani Geography*' says (pp. 80):

*"A close reading of the political and social history, culture and civilization, trade and commerce, as well as geographic conditions of Balochistan and Sindh reveals that both the territories have had very intimate relations since ancient times. Due to its prosperity and richness, Sindh has not only exercised influence on Balochistan but also dominated it. Sibi, Kachhi, Qalat, Loralai, Makran, Lasbela, and the whole of sea coast of Balochistan have remained under the political, social, cultural, and economic influence of ancient Sindh for thousands of years."*

In olden times, the country of Balochistan, because of its geographic location, an entrepote of Indus Valley on the one hand and the developed countries to its west on the other. In those days some important routes coming from Near East and Iran passed through various points in Balochistan to enter the Indus Valley. This mountainous region thus played a significant role in cultural interaction between the two sides.

A group of archeologists from the Natural History Museum of New York had visited some time ago certain remote places of Lasbela. In its opinion, the settlements along the sea coast there represent Harappa Civilization, and there are traces and evidence of the Balochistan sea coast

having then been in the possession of the Harappan people.

In 1730 AD, Kalhora ruler of Sindh Mian Nur Mohammed defeated the armies of the Balochistan ruler Abdullah Khan and established his own rule there. In 1732 AD, Nadir Shah attacked and took it back. Later, Balochistan, like Sindh, gradually came under the sway of the English.

Prior to the emergence of Pakistan, Balochistan was divided into the following three parts:

- (1) British Balochistan, which was under the direct rule of the English.
- (2) Occupied Agency, which was under indirect English rule.
- (3) The third part, comprising four small states viz. Qalat, Kharan, Makran and Lasbela, was in the possession of Nawabs and Khans.

History testifies to the fact that the people of Balochistan and Sindh have always been together. They have never thought themselves separate, nor have they ever been much concerned with barriers of borders. Migrations of Baloch tribes and intermarriages have further strengthened their mutual relations. This process continues even today. Many Balochs, charmed by the soil of Sindh, became Sindhis. Many of the present castes in Sindh like Chandia, Magsi, Rind, Khosa, Shar, Lashari, and others are of Baloch origin. It is said that Doolah Darya Khan, who sacrificed his life for Motherland Sindh during the Samma Period was a Lashari Baloch. Though disputed, Lasharis are also claimed to have been a Sindhi community, which had migrated to Balochistan and on return to Sindh was treated as a Baloch tribe. In any case Balochs and Sindhis have remained very close to each other.

According to an estimate, Sindhi language is spoken by about 40 percent Balochistan population. Most of the provincial chief ministers could speak Sindhi. Some of their family members are politically active in Sindh. Lasbela tract

in Balochistan is a treasure trove of Sindhi language. Much of Sindhi folk literature has already been and can still be collected from there. Many categories of folklore like 'moro' and 'loli' (lullaby) are identical in Balochistan and Sindh. 'Chhalro' (a plain finger ring) is a kind of Sindhi folk song, which is sung in Siraiki tongue. One of its couplets refers to migrations of Balochi and Sindhi tribes as follows:

***The flock is on way, laden animals are to be unpacked in Shaal<sup>o</sup>,  
I'll find thee, and thy journey is kashaal .***

Many Sindhi poets such as Faiz Bukhshapuri, Sael Azad and Raseed Ahmed Lashari also composed Balochi verses. Similarly, many Balochi poets have also composed verses in Sindhi. Here is their brief account.

The Lasbela tract of Balochistan is brimming with Sindhi prose and poetry. Many Sindhi poets have appeared there. Dr Nabi Biakhsh Khan Baloch has written a full length book 'Belaiyan ja Bol-a' (Thus Spoke Lasbelians) about them. Many Sindhi communities like Roonjha, Noomria and Babrria are settled there. They have produced many poets. Shaikh Ibrahim is recognized as first among equals, who include Kabir Shah, Shaikh Hamar, Shaikh Mitho, Doas Mohammed, Umar Faqir Moondro, Allu Basirani and others. Dr. Nabi Bukhsh Khan Baloch writes:

*"Poetry in Lasbela seems to have begun with Shaikh Hamar and ended with Ahmed Shah; that is, it began from Shaikh Ibrahim's family and ended in Kabir Shah's family. Both, Shaikh Ibrahim and Kabir Shah, raised Lasbelian poesy to such heights, which it had neither reached before the former nor attained after the latter."*

Shaikh Hamar and his son Shaikh Ibrahim belong to the same era as did Shah Latif. Shaikh Ibrahim's true date of birth has not come forth. But a tradition has it that he had been appointed Qazi during the rule of Jam Mir Khan the First and that Jam Sahib had given him a testimonial or

<sup>o</sup> Quetta.

<sup>o</sup> Difficult, hard.

certificate in 1210 AH (1790 AD). If his age is conservatively reckoned to have been 40 in 1790, his so estimated birth date [1750 AD] would fall within the lifespan (1689-1752) of Shah Latif. This speculation makes Shaikh Hamar a veritable contemporary of Shah Latif. It is also possible that when Shah Sahib had visited Balochistan in the course of his itinerancy with ascetic minstrels (jogis), he might have held tete-a-tetes with poets in Lasbela. The warp and weft of Shaikh Ibrahim's verse resembles the poetry being composed in Sindh during Shah Latif's era. Like Shah Sahib, Shaikh Ibrahim has also allegorically poetized the folktales of Sindh in the form of 'surs' (tunes/arias) such as Marui, Sassui, etc.

Study of Shah-jo-Risalo reveals that he never praised any ruler of his own time. Nor did he refer to them by name. From amongst those who had lived and gone before his time, he has spoken of the Samma rulers in glowing terms. While praising Samma Jams, he has sometimes gone so far as to entitle even the Holy Prophet <sup>PBUH</sup> as 'Jam'.

***At the time of Jam's birth,  
Fortresses of infidels fell down in thousands.***

Reason for this is that rulers of Lasbela such as Sappar Jam, Jam Abro and others were such do-gooders and benevolent persons that people of Sindh never tired of eulogizing them. Shah Latif speaks for his people, when he says:

***You're sappar, I am supplicant, You're bestower, I am sinner,  
You're paruss, I am iron, I'll turn into gold if You touched me.***  
(Sur Pirbhathi)

+

***You're Sappar, I am supplicant, You're bestower, I am inane,  
Hearing Your call, I strung up the fiddle on my shoulder.***  
(Sur Pirbhathi)

## **Sufism in Balochistan**

People of Sindh and Balochistan are much joined to each other in Sufism as they are traditionally and historically



connected in cultural and social fields. Sufis of both the regions have remained attached in every age. Sufi dervishes have considered the two territories as one. Many pious personages of Sindh have encamped in Balochistan and of Balochistan in Sindh. Hinglaj in Balochistan was a great center of Buddhism. Shah Latif sought and received enlightenment from there too. Numerous inhabitants of Balochistan have been coming to Sindh on devotional visits to this day. Jam Durruk was devotee of Lal Shabaz Qalandar, the great Sufi saint of Sindh. The prevalence of Sufism in Balochistan is narrated briefly hereunder.

Balochistan has been influenced by all the principal sufi Orders (*Tariqas*), viz., *Quadria*, *Suharwardia*, *Chistia* and *Naqshbandia*. Missionaries of each of those orders came to Balochistan and preached their doctrines.

An Afghan devotee of Shaikh Bahauddin Zakariya Multani named Shaikh Ahmed s/o Moosa arrived in Zhob Valley to preach the doctrine of the *Suharwardia Order*. After he died, his descendents have continued the work.

First missionary of the *Chistia Order* in Balochistan was Pir Kabar Syed Shaikh Ataullah alias Shaikh Atua s/o Syed Abi Saeed s/o Syed Ishaq Hazrat Khwaja Maudud Chisti (d. 527 AH/1132 AD), who began his preaching from Shirani of the same Zhob Valley. Hazrat Bandanawaz Gesudaraz and other elders also remained active.

The *Quadria Order* is more prevalent in Sindh, Balochistan and Punjab than any other *Order*. It was preached in these areas by a great number of pious personages. Among the pioneers of this *Order* in Balochistan Syed Shadi s/o Syed Dur Jamal Bukhari and his three brothers Syed Hyder, Syed Ibrahim and Syed Mato are very important. They did their missionary work in Pishin. The teachings of the renowned sufi poet of Punjabi language, Hazrat Sultan Bahu, also played a significant role in popularizing the *Quadria Order*. Dr. Inamul Haq Kausar

writes in his Urdu book *'Tāzkra-e Sufia-e Balochistan'* (An Account of the Sufis of Balochistan):

*"It was during the lifetime of Sultan Bahu (1038-1102 AH/1626-1690 AD) that his Khalifah (deputy) Mullah Ma'ali first of all arrived in Dhadhar and Marri to spread the grace of the Quadria Order. His family elders and Khalifas have kept up the work of preaching Islam on the basis of sufi perceptions of Reality. Perceptivity of Katbar Sharif is also of the same ilk as that of Sultan Bahu".*

Hazrat Rakhial Shah is also an important link in this chain. With his spiritual seat at Fatehpur (Gandava, Balochistan), he has devotees in Sindh and the whole of Balochistan. Besides being a sufi elder, he was a great poet of Sindhi and Punjabi also. A collection of his poetry titled *'Diwan-e Bahrul Ishq'* (Sea of Love in Verse) has been published. He belonged to the sufistic line of Miranpur, that is, Jhok Sharif (Sindh), whose elders have been in close touch with those of Fatehpur. Jhok Sharif is the spiritual seat of Shah Inayat Shaheed, who had launched his movement known as *'Jo Khhere So Khhae'* (He Who Tills Should Consume) from here. Jhok, Bulri Shah Karim and Bhitshah are in Sindh, and all sufi elders of these three places belong to the same Order, the Quadria. Shah Latif, Shah Inayat, Shah Karim and others are beads of the same rosary. Likewise, the Jems of Lowari and sufi elders of Thatta would be seen connected with each other. Saintly personages of Bharchundi Sharif (Ghotki District, Sindh) have also had a hand in the spread of sufiism in Balochistan. A sufi elder of this place, Hazrat Shaikhul Mashaikh Abdul Rahman, commands much respect there. His hermitage at Mekangi Road is still in existence.

Leaders of the Naqshbandi Order in Balochistan are Hazrat Mian Abdul Hakim Nana (1090-1153 AH/1679-1740 AD) and his khalifas, Mian Nur Mohammed Jeodrani Qandhari, Mullah Usman Akhund, Mian Mohammed Hasan Yasinzai, *Murid-e Khas* (special disciple) Baba Kharwari and

others. One of the great personages of this Order was Hazrat Usman Marwandi popularly known as Qalandar Lal Shahbaz. He had come from Marwand to Sindh and settled in Sehwan to perform his enlightening mission, the reach of which extended beyond Sindh border to the whole of Indian subcontinent. He has countless devotees in Sindh, Punjab, Balochistan and India.

Even today there are many *dargahs* (Muslim shrines) in Sindh and Balochistan with seats or families with *dargahs* in both places. Syed Ghulam Shah Jilani, the occupant of the spiritual seat of the Shah Bilawal Nurani's *dargah* in Balochistan and of the Naing Sharif *dargah* in Dadu (Sindh) belongs to Sindh. He also takes part in Sindh politics. In short, the sufi personages of Sindh and Balochistan are not separate from each other. They not only quench the spiritual thirst of their own native people but also of those across the border in the other provinces.

### **Shah Latif, Balochistan and Balochi Language**

In the course of his three-year long itinerancy, Shah Laif, the brilliant most star of Sindhi poetry, had also visited some of the places now included in Balochistan. *Ganjo Takkar* (Hyderabad Sindh), *Hinglaj* and *Lahut* (Balochistan) were the particular radii of the mystic circle for the ascetic seekers, in whose company he had undertaken the arduous trek. In order to attain the endpoints of the mystic radii, they, the ascetic seekers, made halts at many places and went on and on. Shah Sahib has given account of this journey in his surs '*Ramkali*' and '*Khahori*'. From Karachi he went to *Lahut* and *Hinglaj* via Habb (Balochistan). *Hinglaj* is 120 miles [192 kms.] from Karachi. So, he must have seen and observed from close quarters a good part of Balochistan while the walk lasted. He had great regard and affection for *Lahut* and *Lahutis*, and missed them a lot:

*Kapris stepped up to Lahut,  
I sha'nt live without those with emerald.*

*(Sur Ramkali)*

The ascetic seekers of *Lahut*, that is, *Lahutis* are those on the third of the four halts on the mystic path: *Nasut*, *Malkut*, *Lahut* and *Hahut*. As a seeker of Reality, Shah Latif had to tread the mystic path, stage by stage; his journey to *Lahut* was for attaining the third stage. It was for completing the path of Sufism that he had chosen to travel with ascetic seekers, the jogis and the samis; for

*"The Sufi's path is not finished until he has traversed all the 'stages,' making himself perfect in every one of them before advancing to the next, and has also experienced whatever 'states' it pleases God to bestow upon him. Then, and only then, he is raised to the higher planes of consciousness which Sufis call the 'Gnosis' (ma'rifat) and the 'Truth' (haqiqat), where the 'seeker' (talib) becomes the knower or the 'Gnostic' ('arif), and realizes that knowledge, knower, and known are One."* [Excerpted by the translator from *'The Mystics of Islam'*, Reynolds A. Nicholson,; 2002, pp.25]:

***Lahutis held countless converses,  
Alas and alack, I sha'nt live without them.***

*(Sur Ramkali)*

+

***Khahories perceived the Most Praised by inward litany,  
With such words the lovers crossed spacelessness,  
When fully baked, they became Hu<sup>o</sup> with Hu,  
Thus they saw the Most Praised everywhere.***

*(Sur Khahori)*

Shah Sahib undertook this journey in his youth. Referring to it, Ghulam Mohammed Shahwani writes:

*"When he was a young man of twenty-one years, Shah went and spent three years in the company of Samis, the Hindu ascetics, and hence saw Sufism through Vedanta glasses".*

A basic tenet of Sufism and Vedanta is mortification of the self. Shah Latif brought his body, in the prime of his youth, into subjection by self-denial and penance. There is a

• Part of litany 'Allah Hu'.

temple of goddess *Kali* at Hinglaj, whom the Muslims call 'Nani'. There ascetics (*jogis*) and renouncers (*sanyasis*) perform the rite of feeding her milk. Shah Sahib performed the same rite when he went there. Referring to this journey, he says:

*At Hinglaj the Nangas<sup>①</sup> headed for Nani,  
These Mahesis<sup>②</sup> saw Dwarka<sup>③</sup> with pleasure,  
I sha'nt live without those whose leader is Ali.*

(*Sur Ramkali*)

In the way Shah Sahib used words and phrases of the Balochi language, it seems that he held that language close to his heart and esteemed it as much as he did Arabic and Persian by using their words, phrases and/or *ayats*. It is a measure of his artistic excellence that he employs words and phrases peculiar to the locale. It is so with his use of Balochi words and phrases. Here are some examples from *Sur Desi* of the latter use.

*Forget night sleep, you'll soon meet him, Sassui,  
You didn't, says Latif, pay heed to camels' call,  
Onward this very day, get a move on so as to reach the Kechis today.*

+

*I wish to go to my beloved this very day,  
I was told, "O maid, go after Punhun",  
I'll gain strength when my ears hear your call.*

+

*They've turned back their camels' reins,  
Saying, "Well ride toward the mountain this very day",  
Their Balochi talk would be my death.*

+

*My beloved was right here just now,  
I saw him here but he's already gone,  
He'll come back to me with love in the end.*

*{Here is glossary of the words/phrases occurring in the originals of the above four verses: shwa=night, wahav=sleep, shosh=forget, guakhh=call, gosh=ear/heed,*

① Literally Nudes; a sect of Hindu ascetics.

② Worshippers of god Shiva.

③ One of the seven places of Hindu pilgrimage.

*rosh=forward/ toward/to, froshi=this very day, rawan=I go, mana=me, gushtai=said, moldi=you maid, dima=after/behind, dosh=go walk/leg it, phaza=turned, ruvan=will go, dasa daka darri=right here just now, hur=see, paziri=in the end/finally/ultimately.}*

Of the love stories that serve as raw material for some of the 'surs', the one with characters and locales from both Balochistan and Sindh fascinated him most so much so that he devoted five of his thirty surs to it. Its heroine (Sassui) and her locale (Bhambhore) are of Sindh whereas the hero (Punhun) and his locale (Kech Makran) are of Balochistan. Speaking allegorically, Sassui is 'the seeker', Punhun or Hoat 'the sought or the Transcendent', mountain (wilderness or dense jungles) 'the travails of the path', Bhambhore 'the here and now', and Kech Makran 'the hereafter'. 'I' in the following two verses stands for the poet himself in the disguise of Sassui:

*As I held converse deep inside myself, I found  
Land had no mountain nor was I concerned with Kechis,  
I myself became Punhun, all pains arose from being Sassui.*  
(Sur Sassui Abri)

+

*I fell so madly in love with Punhun,  
That staying in this ugly Bhambhore became a torture,  
Don't advise me to back out, girls,  
My life, mates, is now in the hands of Hoat.*  
(Sur Desi)

### **Biographical Sktech of Jam Duruk**

The name of Jam Duruk's father was Sardar Karam Khan. He belonged to Domki tribe. This great poet of Balochi language was born in 1714 AD. He was a native of Qalat (Balochistan). Sindhi poet Faiz Bukhshapuri, whose family had left Balochistan to settle in Jacobabad (Sindh), claimed to be a descendant of the Balochi poet. Mir Mitha Khan Marri has reported his talk with Faiz Bukhshapuri about Jam Duruk in these words. "He said in a proud voice: 'There is no dearth of famous persons in Domki tribe. Each of its generation has produced a great poet. This tradition has continued from Jam

Duruk to me.' According to him, Jam Duruk was Mirozai Domki. No written account of Jam Duruk's life is available. It has, however, been pieced together on the basis of a few oral traditions. Some histories have it that Jam Duruk was a tribal leader by virtue of being the son of a tribal leader. His was a many sided personality. Apart from being a poet, he was also a horseman, a swordsman, a hunter and a sportsman. Above all, he was poet laureate of the Brohi ruler of Qalat Mir Nasir Khan Nuri. Though a court poet, he did not write any eulogy of Mir Nasir Khan, that is, he was not a composer of eulogies. He was a peoples' poet. He fell victim to amorous love. It is generally believed that the woman he fell for was a lady of Mir Nasir's seraglio. When Mir Nasir came to know of it, he started to torment the lover in various ways. Jam Duruk bore it all for his love but did not quit Mir Naseer's court. Ultimately he was killed for his crime of love."

As in Sindhi classical poetry there is the triumvirate of Shah, Sachal and Sami, so it is in Balochi classical poetry where the triumvirate consists of Shahkalan, Shah Isa and Jam Duruk. A Balochi verse regarding this trio says:

***Kalan lit the flame of poesy,  
Isa warmed his hands on its heat,  
N' Jam Duruk blew it into life again.***

Mir Mitha Khan Marri has this to say about the love affairs of Balochi poets: "*It is a strange quirk of fate that three great poets of Balochi language were as unsuccessful in their amours as they could not get hold of the pearl of love. Shah Murid lived a life of agony in separation from Hani, Tawakkali Mast had to shed tears of blood all his life for the love of unresponsive Samoa, and Jam Duruk had fallen in love with a beauty he could not even imagine to win over.*" ('Durchin': pp.56)

The poetic work of Jam Duruk was first of all brought to light by an Englishman named Longworth Dames. In the course of his employment in Balochistan, he wrote down verses of different Balochi poets, while hearing them sung by various musicians and singers of Balochistan and Dera Ghazi

Khan. He compiled these verses in Roman script and published the work under the title '*Popular Poetry of Balouchies*' from London. The Roman script of this publication was later changed to Persian and published with Urdu translation by Mir Khuda Bukhsh Bijarani under the title '*Qadim Balochi Shaeri*' (Ancient Balochi Poetry). An Urdu translation of Jam Duruk's poetry was done and compiled by Mir Mitha Khan Marri into 'Durchin' and published by Pakistan Academy of Letters, Islamabad. This work also contains an account of the poet's life. The compiler doubts authenticity of certain verses, and notes each suspect verse with the remark that it is probably by some poet other than Jam Duruk. As it is, all of Jam Duruk's verses are yet to be compiled. He was a peoples' poet, a sufi, and a devotee of Sindhi saint Qalandar Shahbaz. His piety had also influenced some other sufi poets. One of them, Mast Tawakkali, has even called the senior poet his '*rahber*' (guide). Here is what he says about his *rahber's* poetry, "*Jam alone is a poet, all others are failures*", and then adds:

***Guided as I am by true lovers, I can never stray off the straight path  
Karmu's son Duruk and Shah Murid have bestowed their  
favours upon me.***

Balochi people refer to the poetry of Jam Duruk as '*guptar*', which is a corruption of '*guftar*' meaning sweet talk or converse. His verse is more popular among commoners, that is, illiterates. He left this world in 1784. He enriched Balochi literature. His poems echo through the land to this day.

### **Shah Latif and Jam Duruk**

Shah Latif (1689-1752) was born 25 years and died 32 years before Jam Duruk (1714-1784). Sindh at the time was under Kalhora rule, and some areas of Balochistan like Qalat and Lasbela were part of the Sindh realm. Jam Duruk was thus a Sindhi also. It is possible that the two poets might have met each other somewhere in the course of Shah Sahib's travels in Balochistan and Jam Duruk's devotional visits to Qalandar Shahbaz's mausoleum at Sehwan in Sindh. Both of



them were great sufi poets, renowned far and wide, and hence are likely to have known about each other. Jam Duruk was associated with a ruler's court, whereas Shah Latif kept away from all rulers, indeed, he was at loggerheads with rulers of the time. As Shah Sahib did not praise rulers of time, Jam Duruk too refrained from doing so for Mir Nasir in spite of being his court poet. Both were peoples' poets. That is why common folks' memories were relied upon for collecting their verses. In a strange coincidence, Shah Latif's poetry was first published by a westerner, Dr. Trump, in 1866; likewise, it was a westerner, Longworth Dames, who was the first person to publish Jam Duruk's poetry for the first time. Both Shah Latif and Jam Duruk were hit by Cupid's arrows; but where the former was united with his lady love, the latter had no such luck throughout his life. As Shah Latif's attendants jotted down his verses as he uttered them, so it was with Jam Duruk, who too composed his verses extempore. Shah Sahib has used words or phrases of the then current languages like Arabic and Persian in his poetry, eg. *rahnuma, wa ta izzu man tasha wa ta zillu man tasha, qalb*, etc. Similarly, Jam Duruk has also used Arabic and Persian words or phrases in his poetry, e.g. *ain, paikan, ra'ad, mahtab, qalb, jabin, bilylail, dawar, sanobar, azmat*, etc. As Shah Sahib enriched Sindhi language by introducing a very large number of words, so did Jam Duruk for Balochi language.

### **Poetry of Shah Latif and Jam Duruk**

Juxtaposition of the two poets' verses reveals very few similarities of genres and subjects. Shah Sahib's poetry consists of *baet* and *vai* genres, whereas the genre of Jam Duruk's poetry is *nazm*. Subject-wise Shah Sahib's canvas is almost all inclusive as well as typically fine-drawn. His treatment of each character and subject testifies to his keen observation. The secular content of his poetry is of very high order. So is its sufistic content. His delineation of semi-historical tales, their heroes and heroines, traders, blacksmiths, potters, sea-river farers and tillers as well as of the environment is masterful.

Overall subject or theme of Jam Duruk is worldly love. Even as he pines for his beloved, he has dealt with Oneness, morals, earth and its objects. Like Shah Sahib, he too loved every particle of his homeland. He has spoken of mountains, wildernesses, deserts, snow-clad peaks, hot sanddunes, clouds and rivers of Balochistan.

*"Parts of the Indo Pakistan subcontinent form some of the hottest regions of earth. In this tropical region with a climate of great diversity and range, Sindh is found to be the driest and hottest of all its provinces, the distribution of solar radiation playing a prominent part in this. Aridity is its main characteristic....."* [Excerpted by the translator from 'A Physical and Economic Geography of Sind', Prof. Manek Pithawala, Sindhi Adabi Board, Hyderabad Sindh. 1976, 131].

Geographical conditions in Balochistan are not much different from those of Sindh; so like Sindh, main characteristic of Balochistan can also be said to be aridity. But for the Indus River and its network of canals, whole of Sindh would have been as dry as its eastern desert, the Thar. Rainfall for the people of dry areas, particularly during the summer months, is like *Mana from Heavens*, humbly prayed for and eagerly looked forward to; and when it falls, dried up earth heaves a sign of relief and erupts into a joyous song, which breezes through everything human and non-human. So, rainfall is a subject that should and does occupy a prominent place in the poetics of our two versifiers, one of whom, Shah Latif, has devoted a whole sur, 'sarang', to wit:

***It has rained over deserts n' valleys, depressions are filled,  
Dawn reverberates with sounds of churning across planes,  
Their hands butterful, herds women are well off,  
Housewives milk their cows, one n' all, missing none,  
They're happy in their homes, so're their maids.***  
(*Sur Sarang*)

Torrential rainfall doesn't find favour with Jam Duruk when he says:

*Last night lightning claps and thunder clouds wrought a havoc,  
Dense clouds burst in heavy downpour,  
They rained over Khurasan, Shalkot n' Mastung,  
Forcing the supple-bodied n' sweet-lipped damsel to run away.*

While Jam Duruk's clouds rain over just three places,  
those of Shah Latif cover continents:

*With monsoon came flashing clouds to rain all over again,  
Some flashed over Constantinople, some headed west,  
Some glittered over China, some took care of Samarkand,  
Some wandered to Rome, some to Kabul, some to Kandhar,  
Some to Delhi, Some to Deccan, some thunderclapped over Girnar,  
Some rushed to Jassarmere, from there to Beekanere Bakar,  
Some drenched Bhuj, some spread over Dhutt,  
Some came from Umerkot to pour over Walhar,  
My lord, may you make Sindh ever plentiful,  
My sweet friend, may you keep all the worlds thriving.  
(Sur Sarang)*

Our poets note the direction from which rains come to  
their respective regions.

Shah Latif:

*Today too hair-black clouds are amassed northward, Crimson-  
clad lightnings have come to downpour,  
Beloved mine abroad is united to me by rain.  
(Sur Sarang)*

Jam Duruk:

*North clouds have shown their full force,  
They've caused the scarf slip off her head,  
Drenched her fine hair, her tresses,  
Her embroidered dress is rain-soaked, so is her whole body,  
In these black dark nights her body emits sparks of fire.*

Unity or oneness of Godhead is a particular subject of  
sufis. Whole of their message is based on this single point.  
They believe in unity and shun duality. Our poets are no  
different:

Shah Latif:

*From unity came plurality, Plurality n' unity are whole,*

***Truth is one, don't be misled by any other word,  
All this strife, by God, is from the beloved.***

*(Sur Kalyan)*

Jam Duruk:

***He is secret, Himself witness,  
He is hidden n' manifest,  
He exists since eternity,  
He is director of the whole world,  
We have full faith in all these things.***

Shah Latif:

***He's this, He's that, He's death, He's Allah,  
He's beloved, He's breath, He's foe, He's guide.***

*(Sur Kalyan)*

+

***He is all glory, essence of all beauty,  
His is the face of beloved, Himself ultimate beauty,  
Himself becomes pir<sup>o</sup> murid<sup>o</sup>, Himself the idea,  
All this becomes known from one's own inside.***

*(Sur Kalyan)*

When God Almighty created human souls, He asked them "Alasta biRabbikum?" ("Am I not your God?"). All souls replied in one voice, "Qalu bala" ("Indeed, You are"). Both Shah Latif and Jam Duruk speak of this covenant:

Shah Latif:

***When I heard "Alasta biRabbikum",  
I said "Qalu bala" there n' then with all my heart,  
That was the moment of my covenant with my folk.***

*(Sur Marui)*

Jam Duruk:

***Remember the day when you had promised,  
Had given your word by placing your hand in his,  
That your heart and mind will be one,  
In the service of genie, humans and God's creation,  
This promise is a talisman of cure for the sensible,  
Lord, condone our faults in the name Muhammad<sup>PBUH</sup>.***

<sup>o</sup> Spiritual guide.

<sup>e</sup> Literally, disciple; in sufi parlance, a person who is inducted as guidance seeker after a formal oath of allegiance.

True poets are direction finders for their people. They not only point the people in the right direction but sometimes lead them too. Their poetry is like a glow of light. So is our poets'.

Jam Duruk:

*Answering back is not the way of dust-natured,  
It isn't easy to be of dust nature,  
It is like lifting a ton of steel bars,  
Or as difficult as shooting an iron ring with a bow.*

Shah Latif:

*If anyone tells you off, don't answer back,  
He who initiates aggression suffers,  
Empty handed he goes who nourishes malice.*

+

*No one has ever gained anything from malice,  
Overstrained bowstring snaps n' harms.*

(Sur Aeman Kalyan)

Love of Lord is praised by both the poets

Jam Duruk:

*Those who love the true Lord are sick of unbelievers,  
Humility peeps through their wear,  
They're always saying darud<sup>o</sup> for the Holy Prophet <sup>PBUH</sup>,  
They praise their Lord n' repent in ice-cold winter night.*

Shah Latif:

*Those slain by Oneness chant "Ila Allah"<sup>o</sup>,  
Hearts absorbed in Haqiqat<sup>o</sup>, they measure Tariqat<sup>o</sup>,  
With silence of Ma'arfat<sup>o</sup> they search for the Transcendent,  
They never sleep, nor settle down, nor quit searching,  
Abdul Latif says, they chop off their heads right from their shoulders.*

(Sur Kalyan)

+

*Those who remembered Subhan<sup>o</sup> the whole night,*

<sup>o</sup> Benediction.

<sup>o</sup> "None but God".

<sup>o</sup> Reality.

<sup>o</sup> Divine path.

<sup>o</sup> Gnosis or divine knowledge. {Nos. 2 to 4 are stages of the sufi discipline}

<sup>o</sup> Praiseworthy.

*Their dust, says Abdul Latif, found reverence,  
Countless come to salute their last abodes.*

*(Sur Srirag)*

Humans are not the only species that fall victim to the passion of love, animals do too. What one of the latter species passes through in love is described in the following verse by Shah Latif. The victim is an animal, who, in popular parlance, is not credited with much sense:

*The camel doesn't accompany his herd, nor doe he graze,  
Hit hard by love spike, he's totally done in,  
Forfeiting his life, he crawls toward the beloved.*

*(Sur Khambhat)*

Jam Duruk, however, describes human passion, his own:

*I've tried my best to keep my heart in check,  
By invoking holy names, by advising sanity,  
Like rulers it remains obdurate, unyielding,  
It's out of our reach, grasp,  
Like wrestlers, it squirms hard to break chains,  
Sometimes it has me crying n' at others raises hell.*

Shah Latif reflects the same thinking as under:

*Even as I restrain it, it doesn't bide a moment without beloved,  
More I keep it from pining, more it pines.*

*(Sur Rip)*

+

*Even though chained, padlocked n' haltered,  
She broke them all with one jerk on thinking of her beloved.*

All things that seem to have any link with the beloved are dear to our poets; and sight of the beloved ranks higher in the eyes of the senior poet.

Jam Duruk:

*Bravo, cool breeze, you're heavenly because  
You blow from the direction of my love.*

Shah Latif:

*Whatever comes from the beloved is sweet;  
There wouldn't be any bitterness if tasted mindfully.*

*(Sur Kalyan)*

+

***If they don't perceive the beloved at the crack of dawn,  
I'll pluck them out to feed them to crows.***

(Sur Asa)

How much value the two poets set by their verses is reflected in their following compositions.

Jam Duruk:

***The verses that I've composed are  
Pearl-stringed, diamond-studded.***

Shah Latif:

***What you take to be verses are in fact ayats<sup>o</sup>,  
Meant to lead heart toward the beloved.***

(Sur Sohni)

This comparative study of these two poets' poetic work is no more than tentative. It is hoped that others more qualified would come forward to do a comprehensive study.

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## **SHAH LATIF AND URDU POET KHWAJA MIR DARD**

### **Background**

It is commonly believed that Urdu language came into being by coming together of several languages such as Hindi, Persian and Arabic in the Indian subcontinent; and its emergence as a lingua franca of military helped it gain acceptance sooner than would be normally expected. Its elevation to the status of the only national language of Pakistan has facilitated its development, and it is now one of the recognized languages of the world.

As a developed language of Pakistan, Urdu has influenced other major languages of the country, viz., Sindhi, Punjabi, Siraiki, Balochi and Pushto, and has in turn been influenced by them albeit to much lesser degree than vice versa. How much Sindhi and Urdu have influenced each other is a separate issue. We can, however, shed light on the values common to the literatures of both languages by comparing their respective poets.

Juxtaposition of Shah Latif's poetry with that of the prominent poets of the Urdu language reveals more similarities between him and Khwaja Mir Dard, one of the the top most Urdu poets, than with any other poet of that language. Before comparing the two, it would be proper to have a look at the beginnings of Urdu language and literature.

*"One of the surprises in Indian cultural history around 1700 is that members of anti-artistic Naqshbandiyya order were instrumental in the development of a new literary medium which was, after Aurangzeb's death, to supersede Persian and to become typical language of the Indian Muslims: that is Urdu. A literature in the southern form of Urdu, Dakhni, had already existed since the Middle Ages. Here, too, the mystics had played a decisive role in developing the language since they needed a medium for conveying their message to the large masses, who were neither able to follow the theological Arabic nor the administrative and literary Persian. Among the Dakhni writing poets the Qutbshahi Kings of Golconda (1530-1687) and the Adilshahis of Bijapur (1535-1686) occupy a prominent place. In the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, Wali Deccani elaborated his mother tongue in poems, in which he uses all devices of classical Persian poetry..... Apparently, the Muslims of Northern India, after the breakdown at Aurangzeb's death in 1707, needed a new medium of expression which even the man in the bazaar would understand. Thus, all of a sudden, a remarkable literature in Urdu emerged in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Delhi ..... Delhi, once the center of Persian literature in the Subcontinent, now became the place where Urdu poetry developed to its most beautiful expression. Shah Gulshan and his disciple Muhammad Nasir Andalib, Mir Dard's father, were prominent members of the group who encouraged the development of Urdu poetry. In poetical meetings the forms and figures of Urdu poetry were discussed, new words adopted, awkward expressions discarded so that the language became polished and refined in a comparatively short time, and was able to express the different moods of the population of Delhi, and, later, of Lukhnow, and eventually, of the whole of Muslim India. Most divergent types of poets are found in Delhi at almost the same time: besides the so-called*

sihamists, who transplanted the ambiguous style of some of the Persian writing artists in Urdu, there lived in the first generation after Shah Gulshan and Khan-I Arzu (d. 1756), 'the four pillars of Urdu': Mir Taqi Mir (1724-1810), the love poet, whose sighs still touch every heart, and who belonged to the close friends of Mir Dard, the mystic, who has in his turn written the most perfect Urdu mystical verses. Besides them we find the overpowering personality of Sauda (1713-1780), mainly praised as satirist, criticizing the social and political misery of the 18<sup>th</sup> century India, but also an important religious poet of Shi'a persuasion. The fourth pillar is Mazhar Janjanaan (c. 1700-1781). He was also a member and successful leader of the Naqshbandi Mujaddidi School. Yet, more important for the history of Urdu literature than Mazhar is Mir Hasan (d. 1786) who, in his early youth, attended the poetical sessions of Mir Dard. He has gained fame by his mathnavi *Sihr ul-bayan*, which, though not absolutely original in form or content, is one of the loveliest products of Urdu narrative poetry, and whose atmosphere is somehow reflected in some of the miniatures from the later 18<sup>th</sup> century with their strangely bewitching style. Small wonder that the members of the Mughal court, long famous for its literary ambitions, became interested in Urdu poetry; the luckless Shah Alam II (1761-1806) wrote poetry under the penname Aftab, Sun, and attended musical meetings of Mir Dard." [Schimmel, pp. 11-12 and 14].

It was after the reign of Mughal emperor Akbar (1556-1605) that the language came to be called Urdu. Before then it was known as *Hindi* or *Hindvi*. Dr. Hyder Sindhi writes in his Urdu book '*Hamara Lisani Virsa*' (Our Linguistic Heritage):

*"Even though the term Urdu is now applied to a language, but formerly in the days of Emperor Akbar*

*the royal camp and the residential area of government servants was called Urdu. Even the market where the army men did their shopping was called Urdu Bazar in those days. It was much later that the term Urdu came to be associated with language we know as Urdu."*

According to histories of Urdu poetry, the first poet of ancient Urdu, that is, *Hindi* or *Hindvi*, was Masood Sa'ad Salman Lahori (1047 AD). He was followed by Abul Hasan Yaminuddin Amir Khusrau, who was born in 1253 AD at village Patiali in district Aita of Agra. Amir Khusrau was a great scholar and musician. First two Urdu '*divan*' (complete work of poetry) owning poetesses, Mahlaqa 'Chanda' and Lutfunissa, hailed from Hyderabad Deccan; and first Urdu '*divan*' owning poet was Sultan Ali Qutb, the ruler of Golconda. Lukhnow was another city, where Urdu language and letters thrived.

In the beginning, the themes of Urdu prose and poetry were religious and sufistic. Subjects like love, politics, society, history etc. entered later gradually. First Urdu book in prose, '*Mairajal 'Ashqin*' (Zenith of Lovers) was written by the famous sufi elder Khwaja Bandanawaz Gesudaraz in 1422 AD on religious and sufistic issues.

Persian language and letters have made deep inroads into Urdu language and letters, particularly in the field of poetry, where almost all its genres have come from Persian and become Urduized. For example, one genre of Persian poetry, ghazal, is now a dominant part of Urdu poetry.

### **Urdu Poetry in Sindh**

Some research scholars including Maulana Syed Suleman Nadvi and Pir Husamuddin Shah Rashdi are of the opinion that Urdu was born in Sindh. But some other scholars think differently. One of them, Sharfuddin Islahi, writes in his Urdu book '*Urdu Sindhi Ke Lisani Rawabit*' (Linguistic relations of Urdu and Sindhi):

*"Though this theory does not qualify for testing on the touchstone of knowledge and research, it cannot be denied that the causes, which moulded one of Aryan languages of India into our Urdu, arose first of all in Sindh." He goes on to say, "One aspect of the relationship between Sindhi and Urdu is only due to these causes. We mean the influence of Arabic and Persian which these languages accepted after the arrival of Muslims in India".*

Sindh has produced non-indigenous language literatures not only in Arabic and Persian but also in Urdu. Production of Urdu verse appears to have begun here in the 17<sup>th</sup> century AD, and gone on at full tilt. Many prominent poets of Sindh have produced, besides Sindhi and Persian, Urdu poetry also. Dr. N. A. Baloch's Urdu book titled '*Sindh Mein Urdu Shaeri*' ('Urdu Poetry in Sindh') contains brief accounts of as many as 71 poets of Sindh (along with samples of their verses), who also composed Urdu poetry. His list begins with Mullah Abdul Hakim 'Ata' Thatvi and ends with Syed Abid 'Shaida' Khairpuri, both of whom are believed to have had long lives, the former 100 lunar (1010-1110) or 98 solar (1630-1728) years and the latter 80 solar (1867-1947) years. In order to take a bird's eye view of Sindhis' venture into the field of Urdu poetry, no more than five have been taken from Dr. Baloch's book for mention here.

### ***Mullah Abdul Hakim 'Ata' Thatvi***

Thatta has been home to numerous rulers, poets, writers and elders of renown. The height to which Thatta had risen can be gauged from the present necropolis at Makli, where the last remains of hundreds of elders, kings, ministers and courtiers are entombed. But this historic town was laid waste by alien invaders, due to which considerable treasure of scholarship was destroyed.

First poet of Urdu language that we come across in Sindh was Mullah Abdul Hakim Ata of Thatta. He was born in Thatta. He was patronized by the then governor of Thatta,

Nawab Muzaffar Khan (1063-1069 AH). Dr. N. A. writes in his above cited book that he was born during the reign of Shah Jahan (1627-1658 AD) and died in Thatta long after the reign of Aurangzeb (1658-1707). There are allusions in his poetry to then prevailing political unrest and anarchy. He has also referred to the arrest and martyrdom (1030 AH/1718 AD) of Shah Inayat of Jhok of the 'He Who Tills Should Consume' movement. Ata was basically a Persian poet but poetized in Urdu also. [*The specimen of Urdu poetry given in the Sindhi original of this translation is too complicated for this translator to render in English*].

### ***Mir Hyderuddin Abu Turab Kamil (1100-1164 AH)***

This poet belonged to Kalhora Period of Sindh history. He was a prominent poet of Sindhi, Urdu and Persian. Renowned historian Mir Ali Sher Qani' and poet Mian Mohammed Panah 'Rija', both of Thatta, were his pupils. His father's name was Mohammed Raziuddin. Apart from ghazals, he has composed couplets. [*Tr. regrets his inability to translate the specimen of this poet's verse also.*]

### ***Mir Mahmood Sabir (1115-1185)***

Dr. N. A. Baloch writes in his above cited book that the elders of Mir Mahmood Sabir were descended from Rizvi Syeds of Iran. He was born in 1115 AH at Delhi. When he was old enough, he left Delhi to travel through country, in the course of which he came to Thatta, where he got married and settled down. Thatta at that time was under the rule of Mughal governors. Mughal Empire was then in decline and Kalhoras were gaining strength in Sindh. Mir Mahmood Sabir was very close to Makhdum Mohammed Hashim Thatvi and Makhdum Mohammed Moin, the renowned elders of Thatta, the first of whom was a great scholar and seconds a scholar and wrote Persian and Urdu poetry under the pen name of 'Beragi'

Mir Mahmood Sabir was a great poet of his time. Dr. Baloch labels the period from 1161 to 1181 AH as the epoch of Mir Mahmood Sabir. His poetry had gained popularity

from Sindh to Delhi and from Dēccan to Gujarat. He breathed his last in 1185 AH. Here is a translation of his two Urdu ghazals:

*Who can catch the scorpions of your tresses?  
Who can bind this venomful lock of hair?  
Where your eyebrow will stretch to when you lift your veil?  
Who can stand up against the arrows of your eyelashes?  
The scribe of nature is bewildered at the emerald of your lip  
line,  
Who can explicitly explain the meaning of your beauty?  
Every wave of the river of your love is bloodthirsty,  
Who can swim through them without pulls of passion?  
Sabir is renowned for his love of you, else  
Who can be so audacious as to boast of your love.*

+

*The one closest to heart is called life by some, some this, some that,  
Some call him din<sup>o</sup>, some iman<sup>o</sup>, some this, some that;  
Some call him sweetheart, some Yousuf II<sup>o</sup>, some this, some  
that,  
Some call him risk to iman, some this, some that;  
Some call him Lord of Pulpit, some Saqi-e Kausar<sup>o</sup>,  
Some call him Hyder-e Safdar<sup>o</sup>, some this, some that;  
Some call fresh face a flower, some hair lock spikenard,  
Some call facial mole a nightingale, some this, some that;  
Some call him rose-cheek, some gulnar<sup>o</sup>-face,  
Some call him grace of flower gardens, some this, some that;  
Some call me a beggar, some lover of Shah,  
I call out for his sight, some this, some that;  
Some call love-crazed, some grieved and afflicted,  
Some call Sabir of jungle, some this, some that.*

### **Rohal Faqir (1132-1194 AH)**

A famous poet of Sindh, Rohal Faquir belonged to the Zangeja branch of Jatoli Balochs. His father Shahu Khan Zangejo was a courtier of Mian Nur Mohammed Kalhor. He

- o Religion of Islam.
- o Islamic faith.
- o Handsome like Prophet Joseph.
- o Dispenser of the waters of paradisiacal fountain called Kausar; it is a title of the Holy Prophet.]
- o Breaker of enemy formations.
- o Pomegranate flower.

was a resident of village Padmad Bhit of Umarkot. Rohal was born there. In good time, he became a disciple of the sons of Shah Inayat Sufi and went to live in Jhok. He held an official post during the reign (1161-1186 AH) of Mian Ghulam Shah Kalhoro, and did stints as ambassador of the Kalhora Government at Jaisalmir, Jodhpur and Bikanir. After residing for some time at Padmad Bhit, Dero Thar, Jhok, Kotli near Kotdiji in District Khairpur Mirs', Jodhpur, Jaisalmir and Bikanir, he spent his last days at Kandri, where he is buried. His poetized in Sindhi, Siraiki and Urdu/Hindi. Some other members of his clan like Murad Faquir Zangejo and his own son Shahu Khan Zangejo were also poets. His following verses have the flavour of Hindi-Urdu.

*Only one word is meaningful, no word is infinite,  
O heart, don't be misled, ultimate Lord is just one.*

+

*Pains n' sins of all births are erased,  
Whole being is purified by your sight.*

+

*Reading lakhs of sacred texts wouldn't do without company of  
Truth,  
Beloved's face can't be seen without waking up from the sleep of  
duality,  
Union with the beloved is not gained without forsaking worldly  
charms,  
Rohal is skillful and brave enough not to run away from the  
field of love.*

### ***Sachal Sarmast (1152-1242 AH/1739-1826 AD)***

Sachal Sarmast is the second major poet of Sindh after Shah Latif. His real name was Abdul Wahab alias Sachedin s/o Mian Salahuddin Faruqi. His *murshid* (spiritual guide) was his own uncle, Mian Abdul Haq. He acquired his initial education from Hafiz Abdullah Qureshi, and memorized the Holy Quran while still quite young. A great scholar, he wielded considerable influence during the Talpur Mirs' rule (1783-1843 AD). Like his predecessor Sufi Mansur Hallaj, he raised the slogan of '*Ana alHaqq*' (I am the Truth). He took up "*and developed the tradition*" of Shah Latif, whom he had met



*"When still a boy. His ecstatic poetry surpassed all limits of expression. In Shah's poetry, allusions and subtle images lead the understanding listener into secrets of love, longing, and union; in Sachal's poems (he wrote in four languages: Sindhi, Siraiki, Urdu, and Persian) mysteries of all embracing Unity are put openly before the listener, and his verse reminds the reader often of the enthusiastic folksongs by Turkish medieval mystics, like those of Yunus Emre (d. 1321)"*

[op. cit. Schimmel, p. 26, qq. Tr.]

Sachal Sarmast is entombed at Daraza Sharif near Ranipur in District Khairpur Mirs'. Some of his Urdu verses are quoted below:

*I value friendship of the beloved, my friends,  
Why shan't I remain unconcerned when this world is transient?*

+

*I am friend's friend, there isn't any difference,  
Comprehend 'ana ma'ee', what else is there to say?*

*Even angels came to salute me there,  
Do tell me, o judge, what's my salutation now?*

*Know 'bi yusma' wa yabsar' with true heart,  
Friend is everywhere, what his message is?*

*Indeed, all Reality is of God,*

*Sachal, when he is the master, what then is slave?*

+

*Sometime called faithful, sometimes Muslim, sometimes infidel,  
Sometimes called mullah, sometimes qazi, sometimes dwarf,  
Sometimes acting as Manzur had himself hanged,  
By becoming Zulaikha, had Yousuf made the ruler of Egypt.*

+

*Tell me, o judge, how renowned you are?*

*Books are your pleasure, my mourning;*

*Lover, burn leaves of all the books in fire,*

*Just remember my name is the friend's message;*

*I've succumbed to separation, you want me to read books,*

*Beloved has promised to visit my abode today;*

*Why should he do the missed prostration, whose leader is Love?*

*Forgetting the beloved for even a moment is not the way of lovers,*

*Meaning was understood finally, Murshid told us this:*

*Without love of the beloved, what of infidelity, what of Islam?*

The examples of Urdu poetry by Sindhi speaking poets cited above are an ample proof of the fact that language has never been a problem for natives of Sindh. They can express themselves forcefully in all languages in their ken. Let us now look at Kh. Mir Dard's poetry.

### **Biographical Sketch of Khwaja Mir Dard (1721-1785)**

*"Khwaja Mir Dard's paternal family came, like many nobles, from Bukhara; they led their pedigree back to Baha 'uddin Naqshband, after whom the Naqshbandi order is named, and who was a descendant in the 13<sup>th</sup> generation of the 11<sup>th</sup> Shi'a imam al-Hasan al-Askari."* Mir Dard's great-great-grandfather, Khwaja Muhammad Tahir *"reached Delhi in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. He was granted high office by Aurangzeb; for the religious mentality he'd turned, at that point of history, in favor of the Naqshbandiyya; the time of 'intoxication', the dream of a mystical religion which might bridge the gap between Hinduism and Islam was over; and the seed of Ahmad Sirhindi's teachings grew both in the Subcontinent and the central Asia."* Mir Dard's father, Muhammad Nasir s/o Nawab Zafarullah Khan was born on 25 Sha'ban 1105/24.4.1691, and he himself came to this world on 19 Dhu 'lQa'da 1133/13.9.1721 in the suburb of Delhi. *"Since the descendants of Baha uddin Naqshband are called 'Khwaja' and those of Abdul Qadir Gilani 'Mir,' his parents gave their first-born simply a combination of these two epithets, calling him Khwaja Mir. Later he acquired the penname Dard, 'Pain.'"* [op. cit., Schimmel, pp. 32, 33 and 37; qq. Tr.].

Khwaja Mir Dard *"knew that man, listening today to tales, will fall asleep soon, and become a tale himself. Thus he finished his last aphorisms and was taken out of this perishable world on January 11, 1785"* [24<sup>th</sup> Safar 1199], *"at the age of sixty-six lunar years – that means exactly the age his father had reached. He considered the promised time of his death a special grace since 66 is the numerical value of the world 'Allah.'* He was buried close to his father in the place near the Turkoman Gate in Delhi called the *Baghicha-e yi Mir Dard*, and what he says about the saints who have been blacked with living, radiant

hearts, can well be said about him."

The "small graveyard", where Mir Dard is buried, "is now a slum area. Few people know the place, fewer visit it. And still the man, who has found his last resting place in this modest tomb was, in his time, one of the great mystical leaders of Delhi, was, at the same time, the first to write mystical verse in Urdu. Those, who visit his tomb to recite a *fatiha*, will probably more admire his poetical heritage than his achievements in mystical theology".

Both aspects of his persona find expression in the following works of and on his prose and poetry: *Ilm ul-kitab* (Knowledge of Book), *Nala-e Dard* (Cry of Pain), *Ah-e Sard* (Cold Sigh), *Dard-e Dil* (Pain of Heart), *Sham'i Mehfil* (Candle of Assembly), *Hurmat-e Ghina* (Veneration of Music), *Urdu Divan* (Collected Urdu Poetry) ed. Khalilur Rahman, *Divan-e Farsi* (Collected Persian Poetry), *Maikhana-e-Dard* (Winebar of Dard) by N. N. Firaq.

His prose books elaborate the teachings of the Sufi sub-order, *Tariqa Muhammadiya* (Muhammadan Path), founded and propounded by his father, Khwaja Muhammad Nasir Andalib, in his own treatise '*Nala-e Andalib*' (Lamentation of Andalib or Nightingale). Alluding to the classical tripartition of *shari'a-tariqa- haqiqa*, the elaborator, who became leader of the sub-order, says, the *haqiqa Muhammadiya* (the pre-eternal reality of Muhammad<sup>PBUH</sup> as the first individuation) is higher than all the other individuations; therefore, the *shari'a Muhammadiya* superseded every other law, and the *Tariqa Muhammadiyya* is, logically, is the best and most comprehensive path leading to salvation". One of the tenets of their *Tariqa*, developed by Mir Dard himself, is the doctrine of '*Baqā fī al-shaikh*' as against '*Fana fī al-shaikh*'. Though he "strictly followed the Naqshbandi Mujaddadi School" and "his poetry is filled with classical expressions of Naqshbandi mysticism", in one point, however, Mir Dard "did not follow the tradition of the order and that is his love of music; music and sama'."

Mir Dard was very close to his father, who was a poet of considerable merit. "Small wonder that Dard's son Alam (d. 1807) was also a poet in his own right. Most remarkable, however, are the achievements of his younger brother Mit Athar, whose Mathnawi Khwab u Khayal, Dream and Fantasy, is most intriguing love story which has been regarded as a sublimation of a deep personal experience the vanity of which the young poet realized, thanks to his brother Mir Dard." [op. cit. Schimmel: p. 54, 59, 71].

Compared to the poetical works of his contemporaries, Mir Dard's contribution in this respect is rather small in quantity. The earliest collection of his verses was published in 1847. It was compiled by Maulana Sahbai. Later, among others, Syed Moinuddin Shahjahanpuri, Dr. Zahir Ahmad Siddiqui and Rashid Hasan Khan also published their compilations of his poetry, which consists mainly of *ghazal* and *rubai* genres, and covers, besides mysticism, other themes also. Rashid Hasan Khan has this to say in this respect: "This type of his poetry deals with the world and its phenomenon, power and helplessness, and the kind of frustration which one feels when something within reach remains out of reach. The pain and uncertainty arising out of it have nothing to do with, indeed, are an antithesis of the sense of well being and intoxication gifted by Islamic mysticism."

### **Shah Latif and Khwaja Mir Dard**

The two Sufi poets were almost contemporaries as both lived and died in the same 12<sup>th</sup> century of the Islamic era, and came of age, performed their mission and passed away in the same 18<sup>th</sup> century of the Christian era. Shah Latif was born 32 years before Mir Dard in 1102 AH/1689 AD and breathed his last 33 years before Dard on 1165 AH/1752 AD.

*"Problems of this part of the Subcontinent {Sindh} were almost the same as those that led to Delhi's breakdown: the collapse of the Muḡhal Empire {of which Sindh had been a part since 1595} after*

*Aurangzeb's death manifested itself in the internal struggle among the {Delhi-appointed} governors; eventually, the native Kalhoro dynasty took over the rule in Upper and later in Lower Sind, only to become vassals of the invading Nadir Shah, who first conquered Sind and the Punjab before he reached Delhi 1739 {under the treaty of 26 May 1739 annexed all the territory west of Indus and Hakra rivers'; Lari: 175}.*

Almost the same situation repeated itself when Ahmad Shah Abdali invaded India {several times from 1757 to 1761} although his influence on the scene was not as important as it was in the northern areas of the present day Pakistan." The plunder-raids of Abdali (r. 1747-1773) and his successor Taimur Shah (r. 1773-1793) took place after the death of Shah Latif but during the life time of Mir Dard. Even though Delhi was laid waste obliging many of his prominent contemporaries to go elsewhere in search of sustenance, Mir Dard never left the city.

In spite of all the misfortunes and afflictions that came over Sindh, its literary tradition remained alive and thrived especially in Shah Latif's era. Many fine poets appeared on the scene, and Sufi elders used the medium of poetry to spread their message. Thus Sindhi poetry being composed since the time of Qazi Qadan was now baked red in the fire of Sufism. In comparison, Urdu poetry had just stepped into this field of expression. Viewing the situation, Rashid Hasan writes:

*"We should accept the fact that unlike Persian, Urdu is devoid of mystic poetry. In Sufi poetry of Persian language the elements of philosophy and concentration come together to produce the state of deep exhilaration. Urdu is lacking in this respect."*

"Both Mir Dard and Shah Abdul Latif are poets of the twilight of Muslim India. Their approach to the experience of mystical love and gnosis is as different as are the sunsets in

their native provinces, and still they very much belong to the same spiritual country.

"Dard's mystical writings are filled with fragrant roses, whose petals fall on the dust like drops of blood: The light of the late afternoon of Indian Islam is reflected in his verse in hundreds of small mirrors as they decorate Mughal palaces, and in the brilliant white marble of imperial pavilions --- just as the Rumi painters reflected the colourful Chinese pictures on their immaculately polished wall. The refined culture of Mughal India sets the stage for Dard's imagery, his music and his almost incredible skill in handling both the Urdu and Persian Languages.

"Shah does not mention roses and nightingales in his verse. He sings of the plight of the poor villager, describes the grazing camels and the soft-eyed buffalo calves, gracious rain and scalding desert wind; the large, simple assembly halls in the male quarters and the lowly thatched huts at the river side, are his world, and his music, though indebted to the classical Indian tradition, utilizes the folksongs of his home province until even the cries of the desperate lovers turn into love's own melody."

### **Thematic Similarities between Shah Latif's and Mir Dard's Poetry:**

Both of their poetry collections open with hymns to God.

Shah Latif:

*In the beginning Allah is,  
Who knoweth all, who sits aloft,  
The Lord of the world that be,  
He is the Mighty, Old of days,  
Of His own power established,  
He is Lord, One, only One,  
Sustainer and Compassionate,  
Praise the true Master, sing hymn to the Wise,  
The Gracious Himself sustains the universe.*

*(Sur Kalyan)*

Mir Dard:

*Description of Your attributes is beyond our capacity,  
Verily, You're the Master of Lauh-o-Qalam<sup>o</sup>;  
Step of Reason dare not pass by  
The honoured seat that You adorn;  
Both Shaikh-o-Brahman<sup>o</sup> live under Your shade,  
It's all due to You that dair-o- haram<sup>o</sup> abide;  
If there's dread in the heart, it's of Your wrath,  
N' if there's faith, it's in Your benevolence;  
Eye, o Dard, had opened like a bubble,  
Even a movement's stay couldn't be had in this ocean.*

The passion of love, true and self-negating love is basic to their thinking:

Shah Latif:

*Very sight of venom delights venom-drunk lovers,  
They're addicted to the bitter n' the deadly,  
Latif says, having become love-smitten, they're dying of separation,  
Even as their wounds smart, they don't groan in public.*

+

*It isn't the way of true lovers to secure their heads,  
A moment with the friend is more precious than hundred heads,  
These bones n' flesh aren't worth beloved' spittle.*

(Sur Kalyan)

Mir Dard:

*If we looked in the world hither and thither,  
It was you we saw wherever we looked;  
Bodies became bereft of life,  
Wherever you looked an eyeful;  
Wails, outcries, sighs n' entreaties,  
Whatever we could, we did;  
These lips didn't do resurrecting,  
Though we underwent many a death;  
Amorous nature took its toll,  
Dard's story was cut short.*

Beauty of the beloved is incomparable, matchless.

- Tablet of Destiny and pen.
- Muslim and Hindu.
- Temple and mosque.

Mir Dard:

*Slaying the love, wasn't a bit far from any beloved,  
But this wasn't the custom ahead of your epoch;  
Sparkles of your beauty in last night's gathering, your honour,  
No light was seen anywhere in the face of candle.*

Shah Latif:

*When the beloved takes a graceful walk,  
Earth itself greets saying "Bismillah<sup>o</sup> and kisses the path,  
Rising to their feet, houries look in respectful wonderment,  
By God, beloved is prettier than all.*

*(Sur Barvo Sindhi)*

+

*As they lifted their eyes in gracefulness,  
Sunrays went dim, moon withered,  
Glimpsing the beloved, stars n' Pleiades receded,  
Diamond lost its luster before friend's beauty.*

*(Sur Khambhat)*

Travails, hardships and pains of living are no deterrent for the poets.

Mir Dard:

*Door to another world finally opened before me,  
I am neither anxious about joy nor of sorrow;  
High n' low are level here in my eyes,  
As high n' low pitches of music equalize in an instrument.*

Shah Latif:

*Sorrows are the beauty of joys, fie on joys sans sorrows,  
It's due to them that friend came to my abode.*

*(Sur Husaini)*

Like every sensitive poet, depiction of feelings, sentiments and emotions is an integral element of our versifiers' format.

Mir Dard:

*Only earth was sunk in Noah's Flood,  
I, the dishonor to mankind, have sunk the whole of God-dom.*

- First words in the opening verse of Quran "In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful".



Shah Latif:

*Numerous women were sunk by the river, this woman sunk the river,  
The flow, having lost itself, is dashir-g its head against the banks.*  
(Sur Sohni)

Every creator places a high value on his creation. So do our two artists.

Shah Latif:

*What you think of as verses are in fact ayats<sup>o</sup>,  
Taken into heart, they lead where the beloved is.*  
(Sur Sohni)

Mir Dard:

*Garden of Gnosis will blossom in this tongue,  
I've sown the seed in the poetic soil here.*

The greatest possession of Sufis is their staunch belief in the Unity of Godhead.

Shah Latif:

*Plurality came of Unity, Plurality Unity make whole,  
Real Truth is one, don't be misled by any other talk,  
All this strife is, by God, due to the friend.*  
(Sur Kalyan)

Mir Dard:

*Individuals of the world are one in their plurality,  
Entangled petals of a flower are all one;  
Plurality can't ever upset Unity,  
Body n' spirit though two are but one;  
Humankind's eminent lineage is one,  
With that of angel Gabriel the Confidante;  
It's the heart to which Quran is revealed,  
In the comprehension of the import we are one;  
Followers of 'Shahud'<sup>o</sup> are agreed among themselves,  
Dard, look, eyes together are one.*

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*Negligent, take sight of the world a free feast for your eyes,  
You won't get to see it again even in your dreams;*

<sup>o</sup> Quranic verses.

<sup>o</sup> Allusion to the doctrine of wahdat al-shahud, ie., Unity of Vision.

***Attached to every part of the whole is this meaning:  
Pearl is separate from the sea but is yet immersed in it.***

Sufis are always thinking of their beloved. Rare is the moment when they miss out on it. Such a moment is to them like what a Sufi calls 'Any moment so lost amounts to infidelity'.

Shah Latif:

***Veins have become a rebeck, vibrate all the time,  
No moaning or groaning as there's no response from the friend,  
The beloved, who has grilled, shall have me cured,  
He is indeed the tormentor, the comfort of soul too.***  
(Sur Kalyan)

Mir Dard:

***By a slip of memory, he happened to think of me,  
Since then I am not getting any news of myself from anywhere,  
I should better become fed up with such life,  
How long will you go on living, you stay put? Go die somehow.***

Shah Latif also speaks in the same vein:

***Those of whom you keep thinking, they too think of you,  
'Fa zikruni az zikrkum'<sup>o</sup>, comprehend these words;  
Knife in hand, sugar in mouth is the way of the beloved.***  
(Sur Kalyan)

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***Whenever I recall company of the beloved,  
A sudden cry erupts from my heart.***  
(Sur Barvo Sindhi)

Whatever is written in the Tablet of Destiny cannot be altered. What is fated shall come to pass. So, the inevitable must be borne with equanimity and resignation.

Shah Latif:

***What is writ on forehead can't be transferred to back-head,  
Keep to all that beloved has scribed on the Tablet.***  
(Sur Mazuri)

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***Fate has brought cranes, their habitat is mourtain,  
It is no one's fault, subsistence comes from the Providence.***  
(Sur Dahar)

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<sup>o</sup> A Quranic line meaning 'Remember me and I will remember you'.

Mir Dard:

*We don't ask for anything nor search for it,  
We go along with whatever livelihood has been fated;  
In reflection of acts of the pure-hearted,  
We settle down wherever it is clean and unblemished;  
Our fault is no more than this, o devout man,  
We disclose whatever you harbor in your heart;  
If your sensitive temperament is ruffled by what it reflects,  
We smash this mirror to pieces right now;  
Are these your verses or laments, o Dard?  
They leave such abrasions on hearts!*

+

*I am wounded by the hand of destiny,  
Breath o' Christ, I am a candle.*

Blessed are those, who lay down their lives for others,  
for a noble cause.

Shah Latif:

*Who die before death, they're not defeated by death,  
Who live before living, shall live on.*

(Sur Mazuri)

Mir Dard:

*Men do what their's is to do,  
Some of them die while doing so;  
Death, what do you want from mendicants,  
They die before their hour to die.*

Men find the right path they have been looking for since  
the beginning of time when Almighty leads them to it.

Shah Latif:

*He is the guide, and also the one who leads astray,  
'Wa tuizzu mun tasha wa tuzillu mun tasha'.*

(Sur Kalyan)

Mir Dard:

*We are not aware of any path, o Light of Eyes,  
You are the guide wherever we go.*

It is intuitive knowledge and emotional faith that can  
lead one to the Reality

• Quranic line meaning 'honour and dishonour come as He wishes'.

Mir Dard:

*If you're keen to comprehend Truth,  
Do take the small advice I tender;  
If there be any alien inside you, know him,  
If it be your own self, then no need to know, go to rest.*

Shah Latif:

*The truth of Oneness is 'Wahdahu la sharikala'<sup>o</sup>,  
Whoso wrestled with Duality, thrived.  
(Sur Kalyan)*

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<sup>o</sup> Quranic verse meaning 'He is One, none shares his Oneness'.

## CONCLUSION

What Annemarie Schimmel says in the 'Foreword'[P.XII] and 'To Sum Up'[p.269] of her book about Khwaja Mir Dard of Delhi and Shah Abdul Latif of Bhitshah (Sindh) is also valid, to a large extent, for the other four Sufi poets covered in this book – Rahman Baba of the renamed province of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Bulleh Shah and Khwaja Ghulam Farid of Southern Punjab, and Jam Duruk of Balochistan, all of whom belonged to the 18<sup>th</sup> century except Kh. Farid who belonged to the 19<sup>th</sup>. She writes:

"As different as the two eighteenth century mystics may appear at first sight, they have two important features in common: both were Indian Muslims, deeply steeped in the traditions of Sufism, particularly in its Persian expression; both produced exquisite mystical poetry in their mother tongues; both were fond of music and knew the effect of the celestial harmony on man's heart. Both receded into the depths of their own hearts, closing their eyes to the outside world at a time when 'the world' seemed to illustrate the truth of the Quranic sentence: 'Everything is perishing save His face (Sura 28/88).

'Mir Dard and Shah Abdul Latif constitute two complementary aspects of Islamic mysticism and mystical poetry, in general on the Indian scene particularly. One is the urban, sophisticated and highly intelligent trend as it had developed in the areas under Persian cultural influence, and

which is still enjoyed by every lover of refined poetry, or admired by the expert in mystical theology. The other one is the rural, simple and unassuming Sufism which uses the whole repertoire of inherited forms with great ease without burdening the images with too many theoretical interpretations. It is the kind of Sufism the masses enjoyed, for it offered them some consolation in their miserable lives. They could sing Shah Abul Latif's {as well as Rahman Baba's, Bulleh Shah's, Kh. Fareed's and Jam Duruk's} poetry when ploughing or going out for fishing, picking cotton and spinning it {or grazing cattle or churning curd}, and thus the central concepts of Islamic mysticism --- love of God and the Prophet, and trust in the eternal divine wisdom --- became part and parcel of their daily lives.

"Yet, inspite of the different ways of expressing their ideals which may be called 'naïve' and 'sentimental' according to Schiller's definition, our two 18<sup>th</sup> century mystics in India start from the same premises and reach the same goal: They are firm believers in God's unity and in the greatness of the Prophet. They use almost the same favorite Quranic verses and Prophet's traditions to explain their ideals: They know 'Whithersoever ye turn, there is the Face of God' (Sura 2/109), and they love the tradition 'Who knows himself knows the Lord.' When the difficult journey through the forests and deserts of self is finished and the multi-colored forms of the created world recognized as a mere reflection of the uncreated Light, they see that the Beloved is both transcendent and immanent, both the Beyond the Beyond and the *dulcis hopes animae*. And they understand that Divine Beauty and Majesty, as revealed in human joy and suffering are only two aspects of one Divine Perfection --- may this last perfection be called Light, or Love".



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